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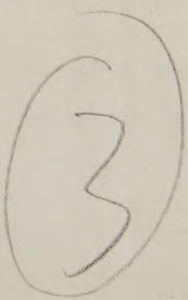

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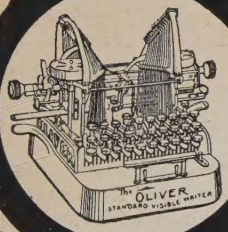

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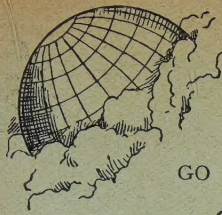

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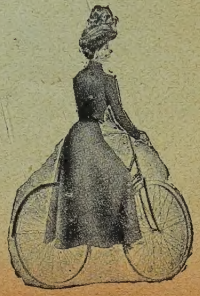

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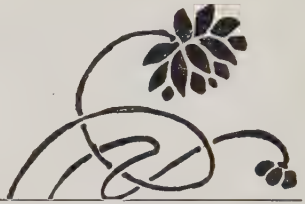

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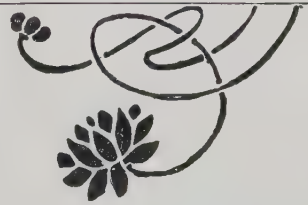

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The Quantock Hills

Their Combes & Villages

BY

BEATRIX F. CRESSWELL

Author of "Dartmoor and its Surroundings," "Taunton and Taunton Deane," etc., etc.

WITH CHAPTERS UPON

Stag-hunting on the Quantocks

BY PHILIP EVERED

AND

The Folk of the Quantocks

BY THE

REV. C. W. WHISTLER.

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rising. Forty years after his death, Leland saw the place, and wrote of the "goodly manor place of Lord Audley, standing exceeding pleasantly, having by it a parke of red deer and another of fallow." The new house was, however, strong enough to be of importance to the Cavaliers during the Great Rebellion, and it is probable that the last vestiges of the abandoned castle were destroyed at that date by the Parliamentary forces.

But antiquarian gleanings of a more or less shadowy nature are all that can be offered as a history of Nether Stowey castle. Upon the steep grass-grown sides, sheep are feeding, where once was fosse and bastion. On the very top are the foundations, excavated some years ago, either of castle or chapel, for it is asserted that a chapel, dedicated to S. Michael, crowned the top of the hill.

The view over the country eastward is very pretty, and when we have looked our fill, the cottage close by deserves attention: at each corner of the top of the walls is a grotesque head, evidently once a gurgoyle or corbel from the old building, the stones of which probably served to build the cottages in this locality. They are inhabited by a race of "Broom Squires," who for many years have settled here, the most noted character in the colony being known as "Trugg," who, in the hunting season, always drives home the cart with the slaughtered deer.

Descending from the castle and passing along the lane, a turning to the right leads to a narrow path, "Water Lane," which, like many Quantock ways, is presently usurped by the stream that babbles alongside, a narrow footway over the stile being the continuation of the walk.

A yard or two along, and a hollow, shaded by an oak tree, with some fragments of walls is all that remains of "Walford's cottage." Look up to the hills, beyond a little break there is a quarry, the site still known as "Walford's gibbet;" for the murderer's story is to-day yet fresh in the minds of Stowey, though the tragedy took place in the eighteenth century. Anyone will tell you the tale. How John Walford, the charcoal burner, in 1789, loved one girl yet married another; how his wife exasperated him by her behaviour until in despera-

tion he murdered her and flung her body into "Dead woman's ditch" on the hills.

Tried and found guilty he was condemned to be hung in sight of the scene, brought from Bridgwater gaol to Nether Stowey, where he ate his last breakfast in the house close to the clock tower, then an inn. And then we hear of the girl he had loved daring to accompany him in the cart to the very foot of the gibbet; hearing his last whispers, receiving his last kiss almost while the rope was round his neck.

Photograph] [*Bert Hole*

A QUANTOCK HIND. WILD RED DEER.

A story of love and crime remembered, though good deeds are forgotten; a shadow of evil never lifted from those ruined walls half hidden by rank nettles under that lonely tree.

The walk may be continued by turning to the left up the hill, the view overlooking the fields called "Five Lords," I believe, because five properties meet there.

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PREFACE.

I CANNOT but think that I owe some apology to the Quantock Land for venturing to introduce its beauties to the public in a guide book. I have a keen impression that the Quantock Land does not particularly wish to be "opened up," to use the common expression for letting loose a horde of trippers upon some hitherto quiet and inoffensive bit of scenery.

If this were to be the result of a guide to the Quantocks, none would more regret it than myself, and, also, I am sure, the Homeland Association, at whose request this book is written. But I do not think it likely. The Quantock Land is so small a district that the superficial tourist can easily rush round it in a day's excursion, and feel satisfied that he has seen the Quantock hills.

On the other hand, the man who delights in historical reminiscences, in literary associations, and the ever-varying face of nature, while quietly enjoying its charms, will receive a hearty welcome from the Quantock Land, which, like a woman, wishes to be admired, but in her own way.

My task has been to gather all the information obtainable from books, personal observation, and from those who have resided all their lives upon the hills, and with this to produce a book which shall afford, in popular form, a complete account of the Quantock hills and surrounding district.

It may be objected that I have included a great many places which lie at a considerable distance from the Quantocks, but all these will be found to have such strong connections and associations with the hills, that no history of the locality would have been complete without alluding to them.

These few prefatory lines cannot be concluded without an expression of my gratitude for the kindly welcome I received from many residents in the Quantock Land, and for all the help so willingly given me in information as to places, and the loan of valuable books.

Were I to mention names, the list would far exceed the meagre "bibliography" of printed works from which I have borrowed information.

I only trust that they will receive the book as kindly as they did its author.

Beatrix F. Cresswell.

Dawlish, 1904.

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THE QUANTOCK HILLS:

THEIR COMBES AND VILLAGES.

CHAPTER I.

A SUMMARY OF THE DISTRICT.

"A quiet spirit-healing nook,
"Which all methinks would love,"

— COLERIDGE.

WHERE are the Quantock Hills? Those who know them would be surprised at the frequency with which this question is asked, even by people who possess a certain familiarity with the West of England. It would seem as though travellers who seek the beauties of South Devon, and the Cornish coast, or hasten towards the grand scenery of Exmoor, entirely ignore the range of hills, albeit they are not wanting in size, that stretch north and south from the Severn sea to the vale of Taunton.

The Quantock district may be described as lying between Bridgwater and Minehead, extending some twelve miles from north to south, by four or six miles from east to west, a small area unfrequented except by those who have learnt to love it, and full of characteristic interests that increase with every day spent in the locality.

Though the motor cars sweeping along the Minehead road may pass it in an hour or two, smothered in their own dust which hides everything; or the cyclist spin in an easy day's ride all round the hills, along the excellent high road that circles them, a month or two may be

spent in the Quantocks without exhausting their charms, and it takes a lifetime to know them intimately.

The name Quantock is Celtic, "Cantoc, or Gwantog" as it was anciently written, and is believed to mean "the place full of combes," and these combes—wide spread dales running up the hills—are the great natural characteristic of the locality.

On the eastern side, notably from the top of Kilton hill, the whole length of the range lies before the eyes, from Cothelstone Beacon, turret crowned on the south, to where the range drops at West Quantoxhead into the sea. A special landmark is a group of trees usually called the "waggon and horses" or the "plough" (which means the same in the Quantock dialect), but sometimes of late, the "camels," from the quaint silhouetted likeness to either on the ridge from below. North of this rises Danesborough, or Dowsboro', above Nether Stowey; and if it is clear Wills neck, the highest point, 1260 feet, shews behind in the south-west.

These wooded undulating slopes have an odd fashion of hiding themselves. There are days when half concealed by misty veils they seem distant, lofty, unattainable, while at other times they appear to draw within reach and laughingly shew us how easy they are to climb. For in truth the wildness of the region is but the playfulness of a charming child "making pretence" to be something extremely terrible, and betraying the jest by its laughter. In the Quantocks there is nothing of that vast wildness which gives almost a touch of terror to some of our English moors. Here Dame Nature is all tenderness: the wind fluttering through the trees seems to fill the leaves with laughter: the wide views from the heathy summits extend over scenes of culture and prosperity. Only in winter, when the trees are bare, do the hills become grey and saddened, or lie chill white under heavy snows; but even then whenever possible they become astir with horse and hounds, and the voices of the streamlets are never silent.

The geology of the range is very interesting, the formation being Devonian, and the soil composed of the Devonian sandstones, shales and limestone: in many

places it is full of fossils. The lias appears on the sea shore at Kilve, and at East and West Quantoxhead.

At Bincombe hill the slate is full of fossil shells and some corals; other madrepores, especially the species called "*favosites*," have been found at Aisholt and Over Stowey. Those who are interested in geology should

Photograph] [*Mr. A. Whitby*

A HAUNT OF THE RED DEER.

The heart of Somerton Combe.

examine carefully the old quarries at Cothelstone, Over Stowey, and Dodington. At Hestercombe there is a quarry, now, I believe, disused, where the slate joins a granite dyke, the granite being locally called "pottle-stone." A very full and interesting account of the

geology of the district will be found in the *Proceedings* of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society for 1854.

The variety of soils and situations makes the district rich in flora, uniting as it does the flowers of moorland and meadow, sea-shore and woodland. Many of these are universally found among the moors and marshes of the West of England, but among the rarer species are included the *Lemon-scented oreopteris (aspidium oreopteris)*, *Wilson's filmfern (Hymenophyllum Wilsonii)*, one of the rarest of British ferns; the *Deer's hair sedge (scirpus holoscenus)*, which only grows here and across the neighbouring North Devon border; and on the highest points two species of stag's horn moss. In the bogs may be found the Bog harebell (*Wallenbergia*), and both sundews. In the woods helleborine, and a pink variety of the lily of the valley. Foxgloves, Herb Robert, and wild hyacinths are found in white varieties as well as the usual colours. The Cornish money-wort *(Sibthorpia europea)*, white climbing corydalis *(C. claviculata)*, and the Burnet rose grow luxuriantly in certain favoured spots. I purposely omit mentioning localities, as too frequently information about rare plants leads to their extermination.

Those who take a genuine botanical interest in the subject, will find much information in a paper "On the Flora of the Quantocks," by the Rev. W. Tuckwell (*Proceedings* Som. Arch. and Nat. Hist. Soc., 1872).

The district is well populated, for in this small area are at least eighteen villages, besides Williton, Watchet, Nether Stowey, and Stogursey, which attain the dignity of little towns. Many of the villages seem only to consist of the church, parsonage, and a cottage or two, the parishes being somewhat scattered by the dwellings lying far apart on the hills. The Quantock churches do not boast of quite such fine towers as elsewhere in Somersetshire; they are smaller, sturdier buildings, as befits a hilly country near the sea, and many of them are rough cast outside, being built of the crumbling local limestone that quickly wears away under the weather.

Details of sport will be given in this volume from the

experiences of a practical sportsman, but it would be impossible to mention the local characteristics without alluding to this, for to be in touch with life on the Quantocks it is necessary to shew some sympathy in the sport that occupies much of the attention of every dweller on the hills. There is scarcely a cottage to be entered that has not its trophy of stag's slot, or fox's brush, and every one has a hunting tale to tell. The Red Deer is king of the woodlands, but the fox, the hare, the game birds, share with him the dubious privilege of being preserved part of the year and hunted the rest of the time. Autumn is the busy season on the Quantocks, when the sport fills every place with those who seek it either for profit or pleasure. Then, too, the country looks its best; the purple heather mixed with the golden bracken covers the hill tops, the woods shew every tint of red and brown: it is a world astir with life and liveliness, and richness of colour in every direction.

Such, then, is the Quantock Land: but how do we reach it?

Truth to tell, one of the charms of the locality consists in its being somewhat out of the way. There are three approaches. From Taunton the southern end may easily be explored. Williton on the north-west has a station on the Minehead line; or from Bridgwater an omnibus goes and comes every day along the eastern side. In arranging a long day's excursion among the hills it will be worth while to take some luncheon or to plan the ramble so as to reach one of the larger places for food or sleep, as nothing can be obtained in the small villages.

There is good accommodation at Williton. Watchet is a nice little sea-side town, too unsophisticated to be called a watering place. Lodgings can be had at East Quantoxhead, Kilve, Holford, Dodington, and Nether Stowey. The district is threaded by roads in every direction, nearly all of them fit for cycling. The sign-posts are fairly good, and even in the wildest parts of the combes one does not very frequently lose the way. Indeed, there is little fear of being badly lost on the Quantocks, even in a fog, for in course of time one would be sure to reach some hamlet or cottage. On

fine days the surrounding landmarks are too obvious to be mistaken.

The Quantocks have been badly treated by literature; indeed they may be said to have been almost neglected, which is more remarkable when one remembers that both Coleridge and Wordsworth found homes in the hills. Yet, save for a few scattered lines among their works, they leave no traces of their residence here.

A charming little book, now out of print, is *The Quantocks and their Associations*, by the late Rev. W. L. Nichols.

The Land of Quantock, by the Rev. W. P. Greswell, has lately been published: it is a book full of archæological information.

Thomas Poole and his Friends, by Mrs. Sandford, gives a delightful account of Nether Stowey and its yet remembered "worthy," Mr. Justice Poole.

Mr. Ll. Warden Page concludes his *Explorations of Exmoor* with a couple of chapters on the Quantock Hills, which give a good deal of information about the camps and tumuli that are to be found on the heights. The whole book is worth reading through, as in other chapters there are many interesting allusions to the district, especially in the earlier parts of the volume.

In fiction, the older history of the Quantocks, so intimately connected with King Alfred, is worked out in the Rev. Chas. W. Whistler's *King Alfred's Viking*, and *A Thane of Wessex*; while *Micah Clarke*, by Conan Doyle; *Mistress Dorothy Marvin* (J. C. Snaith) and *Triscombe Stone* (Portland B. Akerman and Norman Hurst) treat more or less directly of the locality, and, of course, of Somerset's special period—the Monmouth Rebellion.

This brief list, saving for papers in the Archæological Society's Proceedings, sums up the Quantock literature, with which we may supply ourselves in preparation for a rainy day, since it is possible that we may experience some bad weather before we have finished our exploration of the Quantock Hills.

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CHAPTER II.

TAUNTON TO THE QUANTOCKS:

Hestercombe. Kingston. Cothelstone. Bagborough. Bishop's Lydeard. Broomfield. Holwell Cavern. Hawkridge. Aisholt.

THE traveller who has seen all he cares to see at Taunton, notably, St. Mary Magdalene's Church, the Castle and Museum, * spending some time there, long or short as his inclination suggests, begins to turn his attention to the Quantock Hills which lie in soft green undulations to the north of the town. Cothelstone Beacon will be the first point of attraction: it is but some eight miles off, and is a popular excursion for driving or walking.

But, as we are specially exploring the Quantocks, let me hasten to say that there is no need for anyone who is making the way thither to go into Taunton at all. You need never quit the station if you are changing into the Minehead line for Williton, or by stopping at Bishop's Lydeard the southern side of the hills is easily reached on foot. The cycling tourist, that independent person who only resembles the snail in carrying all his luggage with him, needs but quit the station, turn a short way up hill, and take the Cheddon road to the right, out of the town.

Walking is fashionable at present. Let us follow him afoot along the winding lanes—he is swiftly out of sight, but I fancy we shall see him again, unless he proves a very magnificent hill climber, for steep are the ascents which lead up to our destination on the hills.

* *See* Taunton and Taunton Deane by Beatrix F. Cresswell. No. 29 of the Homeland Handbooks, 1/-, paper cover.

Anciently, this southern portion of the Quantocks belonged to the Manor of Taunton Deane, and was a possession of the See of Winchester. Some sense of this old association lingers in the feeling that here we are in Taunton Deane rather than on the Quantock Hills.

Where the signpost points for Kingston and Broomfield, the road starts abruptly upwards. To the right lies Hestercombe, formerly the home of the Warres, now belonging to the Portman family. The house has been largely rebuilt, one gets a good view of it lying under the luxuriantly wooded hills, just as our road turns into Kingston.

This is a large village, not offering any special interest except for the orchards which originated the far-famed "Kingston black" cider apples, and the fine church, which has one of those beautiful towers for which Somerset is famous. The south porch retains three image niches outside, and the roof has those beautiful fan groinings with pendants, the last and loveliest development of the Perpendicular architecture. Another niche, and a fragment of the holy-water stoup, remain within.

Among the carved bench ends, one shews the date 1522. The pulpit is beautifully carved in later style, with wreaths of fruit and flowers, like the work of Grinling Gibbons. In the south aisle is a large altar tomb of Warre, of Hestercombe, but to which member of that family is now unknown. The south-east window has a pane of old German glass representing the Nativity. Here, too, on a desk is a chained book, "Bishop Jewell's Defence of the apologie of the Church of England," and a large Bible of 1617. Near the south door a Seventeenth Century brass commemorates Thomas Dyke, 1620, having a couplet issuing from the skull—

> "Farewell, fond wòrld, I found thee vaine at best,
> On Abraham's bosom I find sweeter rest."

Having visited the church we can quit Kingston and pursue our way upwards over Buncombe hill to Cothelstone beacon. As we ascend we begin to get some idea

Photograph] **TANNERY COMBE, HOLFORD.** [*Frith and Co.*

(*See page* 32).

of what these Quantock hills are really like: deep combes clothed with woods from top to bottom lie on every side: we are gradually led under the trees which shut out every view till at the top they open to reveal vistas of hill beyond hill, combe beyond combe, equally green, wooded and luxuriant. Turning to the left at the top of the hill the beacon presently comes in sight, on the open moorland. Whether the half-ruined tower standing there was built for a beacon, a hunting box, or a "folly," seems uncertain: we shall care little for the ruin as we stand gazing at the view. Behind us on the south is the wide fertile vale of Taunton with the Blackdowns at the extreme edge, the Wellington monument, that slender conspicuous obelisk, leading the eye over the Devonshire border, till we turn us westward where the magnificent heights of Exmoor rise above the Brendon hills, Dunkery beacon the highest point. Stretched before us northward is the line of hills we are exploring, Wills-Neck some three or four miles away on the north-east. A slender track threads the ridge of the hill: this is a path rough, broken, yet never vanishing, which runs from one end of the Quantocks to the other, from Cothelstone beacon to the sea. That silver streak northward is the Severn sea, the dim Welsh coast beyond it hanging hazily on the horizon, seeming as one looks at it a wonderful fairy land of legend, rather than a bit of this troublesome world. Across that strip of water came the saints who brought Christianity into this corner of the west, passing out of the dimness and into the shadow of legendary lore, leaving their names behind them in the localities where they are believed to have stayed: as St. Keyne at Keynsham near Bristol, St. Columban at Culbone, and St. Decuman at Watchet, whose church we shall visit before leaving the Quantock land.

Between us and the Welsh coast two island rocks rise from the Severn sea, Steep-Holm and Flat-Holm. They are reached by boat from Weston-super-Mare. Flat-Holm, the larger of the two, is some seventy acres in extent, and even possesses an inn. Seen from here, lying shadow-like on the water, they seem but part of the shadow stories of olden time. On Steep-Holm,

Gildas, the sixth-century historian, established himself with a small monastery, and is there said to have written his British history. At that time St. Caradoc, the hermit, was his neighbour on Flat-Holm. This latter became in 918 the scene of a gruesome tragedy; the Danes landing at Watchet were defeated with great slaughter; some few got away, and these "sat down on the island of Bradan-relice (Flat-Holm) until such time at they died of hunger."

There they starved, out on the shadeless rock upon the open sea, in sight of land, in sight of plenty, in reach of succour, only none had learnt to succour his enemies in those rude times, and we can picture the folk on the shore rejoicing in their safety, watching with revengeful pleasure as day by day the little group of starvelings on the island dwindled, and fell faint with exhaustion.

More than a century later, when William the Conqueror laid siege to Exeter, where Gytha, Harold's mother, was living, she and her ladies managed to escape down the Exe, and somehow (one wonders how the journey was taken) found her way by sea into the Severn, and then, probably not daring to land, took refuge on the Flat Holm.

At the present day one of the principal interests of these islands is that Steep-Holm is the only locality where the peony grows wild in Great Britain; it is believed to be naturalized there, not being actually indigenous to England.

Turning to the farthest east the view stretches up to the Mendips, a scene of long green marshy flats, broken by the Polden hills. The mound of Boroughbridge, close at hand, reminds us of Athelney and King Alfred, just as Glastonbury Tor, farther in the distance, recalls Saint Joseph of Arimathea and the wondrous abbey, once the very centre of learning and charity in the county of Somerset.

Here, too, we overlook Sedgemoor, just beyond Bridgwater, for page after page of history is written here on the green country-side, and though time and manner may alter a little the appearance of the land, the stories will never be forgotten.

The road to Bishop's Lydeard from Cothelstone Beacon descends a hill through beautiful beech woods: it is an extremely lovely road, but very steep, marked with a danger board, to the warning of which cyclists should give wise heed, for the hill drops suddenly, and winds round sharp corners. As we descend, the large white mansion, Cothelestone House, comes in sight in the park below, with a lake close by it gleaming among the trees.

Photograph] [*Mr. H. C. Corder*

AT COTHELSTONE.

We seem descending almost upon the tower of Cothelstone church, as we wind down the hill through an avenue of wind-swept beech trees. On the right, in a field just before we turn the corner, stands Saint Agnes' well, a little stone building whence the clear water

trickles into a pond at the bottom of the field. Church, manor house, and some cottages all stand grouped together in the park, the approach to the Manor being through a massive gateway of historic interest. A small trap-gate close by leads across a field to the church.

The Manor was anciently the home of the Stawells, and is a fine type of Jacobean domestic architecture, admirably restored. Sir John Stawell, a loyal Cavalier, fortified it in 1646, and was here bombarded by the Roundheads under Blake; not only was the house almost reduced to ruins, but the gallant Cavalier was imprisoned by the Roundheads in Newgate for sixteen years, only obtaining release at the Restoration, to find the state of his fortunes as desperate as that of his house. Much of the property restored to him he was forced to sell, retaining Cothelstone, but he died, probably in consequence of his long imprisonment, in 1661. His heir was created a peer, and, as Lord Stawell, stoutly adhered to James II during the Monmouth rebellion. He could not however refrain from reproaching Judge Jeffreys for his cruelty during the bloody assize: Jeffreys retorted to his appeals by promptly hanging two Taunton gentlemen, Colonel Bovet and Mr. Blackmore, to the arch of the gate in front of the mansion. The Manor was restored with the greatest care in preserving its original features, by Mr. Esdaile, owner of the property, and of Cothelestone House. The beautiful Jacobean gatehouse, just in front of the manor, is the only actually ancient part remaining, and is one of the finest specimens of its period.

Manor, church, and cottages are a most harmonious group of buildings, so great has been the care taken to render the new parts of the same style, and colour in stone work, as that which is old. The sexton's house, behind the church, seems as if it were part of the old manor, and here we may ask for the key, and spend a few moments in the interesting little church. There is a stoup in the porch: inside we shall note that one pier is Norman, that on the south side by the tombs of the Stawells. The older of the tombs is of the fourteenth century, with a knight and lady reposing upon it.

It still retains traces of ancient colouring in the knight's armour, and the lady wears a green robe. The other tomb, of the sixteenth century, has effigies of another knight and lady cut in marble: the knight's figure is a particularly fine piece of sculpture, the carefully executed veins on his hand suggesting that the work must have been done from a cast and be a most careful likeness.

The Perpendicular font has fleur-de-lys painted in the corners of its carved quatrefoils—a somewhat unique feature: on the carved pulpit and bench ends the armorial bearings of the Stawells, "a cross lozengy," may be noticed, repeated more than once among other coats-of-arms.

Bagborough church is hidden away among trees, and from the high road to Crowcombe a fine view is gained of Bagborough House, lying under the hill, the seat of the late Mr. M. Fenwick Bisset, formerly master of the staghounds. Indeed, it is from its connection with hunting, and this well-known and popular "master," that Bagborough gains its principal reputation. A very long steep hill leads out of the village on to the wooded top of the Quantocks, and those who may be in Bagborough, and have the energy to make the ascent, will find, more than half-way up, an artificial ruined castle on the side of the hill just opposite a large farm. It is rather picturesque, much prettier than Cothelstone Beacon, and close by it is the quaint figure of the nude huntsman with his dog, of which mention is sometimes made as if it were near Cothelstone Beacon, the confusion arising from the fact that both places are in Cothelstone park. I cannot learn that any particular name is given to this second tower, which lies in such an out of the way spot that casual visitors to the Quantocks might never find out its existence.

At Bishop's Lydeard we seem to be quitting the Quantocks, though where the district should begin or end seems difficult to define. The village should certainly be visited by anyone staying in the neighbourhood, for it has a grand church with a fine cross in the churchyard, excellent carved bench ends, and a good screen,

along the top of which is carved the Apostles' Creed in Latin. In the village are some picturesque almshouses, dating from the 17th century. As there is a station here, advantage can be taken of the railway to return to Taunton after our day's ramble on the hills.

Another day's excursion can easily be made from Taunton to Broomfield and Holwell cavern. For the first two or three miles we follow the same road, but instead of turning into Kingston at Hestercombe, we must pursue the way uphill. Long and steep it is, and in some places rather rough. After a couple of miles Broomfield church comes in sight, standing with the school at the end of an avenue of beautiful beech trees. On the left, near the church, is Fyne Court, where lived Mr. Andrew Crosse, noted for his experiments in electrical chemistry, which were really the beginning of all our modern discoveries in the powers of electricity.

Obtaining the key of the church at the school, we enter the churchyard where the cross stands on the right hand, the top replaced by a sundial. In the porch there is a Decorated stoup for holy water, and the very fine carved bench ends attract the attention as soon as we enter the church: they are among some of the best in the county.

On one of the Perpendicular pillars, the emblems of the Crucifixion will be observed carved upon shields. In the south chancel window are some remains of ancient glass: on one side two kneeling figures, with a scroll above them, bearing the words—

"*Orate pro bono statu Alicie* ——"

above them two angels, on the other side are the arms of England and France, and St. John's eagle, with the inscription, "*In principium erat verbum verbum erat apud Dei.*" Another shield seems to bear initials with a curious twisted scroll.

To reach Holwell cavern, we must continue up the hill, taking the left hand where the road forks beyond the smithy, and so reach the top of Broomfield hill and cross the moorland. By-and-by we shall find ourselves on Buncombe hill, and at the sign-post where five roads

meet, take that for Bridgwater. In a very short time a little inn, "Traveller's Rest," appears, and the road again divides: this time we must go to the left on the turning for Spaxton, descend the hill, and at the very foot of it follow a field path which turns on the right near a very large barn. This goes direct to Holwell farm, and as we walk thither it seems a puzzle to imagine where among all this cultivation and pasture

Photograph] [*H. Montague Cooper*

BISHOP'S LYDEARD CHURCH.

land a cave can be hidden. Those who intend to see Holwell cavern should either be provided with candles and matches, or ask for a light at the farm, where they will lend a stable lantern. Thus provided, and furnished with the key, pass up the field on the right, keeping

close to the hedge. Presently the arable land is broken by a little copse, damp, tangled and threaded by the tiniest of tracks, that leads to the cave entrance, barred by a gate. It is a weird journey if taken in solitude, and needs nerve to plunge alone down those damp steps and into the very heart of the hill. The passage, like all cave passages, is low and damp ; pursued far enough, it leads into a good-sized chamber, where the stalactites and stalagmites are fine, and where there is a pool of water. Indeed, the unwary sometimes stumble into the pool before they have time to admire the stalactites !

Cresting a wooded hill about a mile due north of Broomfield Church, is Roborough camp, which might well be explored on the way to Holwell cavern by an alternative route. The walk is somewhat rougher, but the distance is if anything somewhat less. The lane to the left below the church will lead, across the main road, to Willoughby farm, at the back of which the camp lies. Its area is covered with a new plantation, but the earthworks are very fine, and are the only definite example of Roman handiwork on the hills. A remarkable point about this camp is the existence of a tunnelled way, which has been protected by a special bastion, to the nearest water supply in the valley below. It is not so many years since this tunnel was passable, but it is no longer so. A field to the westward of the camp is still known as the "golden field," owing to the many coins found in it at one time or another. Probably it was the camp market place for traffic with the Britons. There is no special view from the camp, for its position has been chosen for strategic purposes, rather than as an inaccessible refuge, as the British camps such as Dowsboro' were. The road onward to Holwell starts from Willoughby farm yard, to which one returns, and leads westward, up the hill, to join the main road to "Traveller's Rest," after passing under a curious wooden "hunting bridge" across a deep part of the lane over the open hillside.

The best parts of this end of the Quantocks might be seen, even on foot, in one excursion, by omitting Kingston and taking Broomfield, Holwell cave, Cothelstone,

and Bishop's Lydeard together, and the cyclist might finish by returning from Cothelstone through Kingston to Taunton, but Broomfield hill is wholly unrideable.

If a return to Taunton is not intended it is an extremely pretty bit from Holwell cavern to Aisholt, part of the road running in the deep wooded valley by Merridge church, with a tinkling stream accompanying the traveller all the way. Presently, turning to the left, comes the inevitable hill, the road afterwards winding along the edge of the valley across which appears Aisholt church against the trees, a lovely group of a tiny old church and thatched cottages against the green background. Aisholt's sole claim to our attention is its prettiness, and certainly it is a lovely spot; a "turn again" among these deep combes, for we must get back to the cross road on Hawkridge common if we would make our way to more populous places.

From Taunton to Nether Stowey by this route over the hills is about twelve miles, not a very laborious day's walk for a pedestrian; the luggage might be sent by parcels post, and we shall meet it with a good appetite for an evening meal on reaching Nether Stowey.

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CHAPTER III.

BRIDGWATER TO NETHER STOWEY:

Cannington. The Church. "Parsons the Jesuit." The Castle. Story of John Walford. Danesboro'.

NETHER STOWEY is, in my opinion, the best centre for making a thorough exploration of the Quantock district. It may be more out-of-the-way for the southern end of the hills, just described, but, excepting this, the most interesting, and most beautiful excursions of the locality are to be reached from the little town, either by walking, driving, or cycling, without much exertion.

From Bridgwater, the eight miles of road to Nether Stowey, are daily traversed by an omnibus which leaves Bridgwater post-office early in the afternoon, and gets to Nether Stowey at five. A carrier, who will also take passengers, comes out daily from the town. The omnibus goes the entire length of the hills on this eastern side, the route being from Bridgwater to Kilve, about twelve miles; it brings the letters from Bridgwater for a second afternoon delivery, and leaving Kilve early in the morning takes a mail with it. The other letters arrive by the mail from London at Bridgwater at about 1 a.m., and are brought into Nether Stowey by the post office mail cart, which arrives at 5 a.m. for a first delivery, and takes out the letters for London at 8 p.m., so that the Quantock villages get the advantage of two postal deliveries a day.

Bridgwater, the birthplace of Admiral Blake, has been described as "a busy town with a notable history." We, who are on our way to the Quantocks, may perhaps have a little time for staying here, to find Blakes'

house, visit the handsome church, or lean over the bridge that crosses the Parrett, and watch the tide rush in on a "bore" from the Severn sea.

And the inexorable omnibus, in which we have taken seats, jolts us through Cannington, four miles from Bridgwater, giving us no opportunity of seeing the fine church, notable for having its twelve consecration crosses still marked outside; or musing on the romance of Fair Rosamond, who was born here, according to tradition, and brought up by the nuns of Cannington Priory, and here, in the Manor house near the church, now an industrial school for Roman Catholic boys, was first loved, not wisely, but too well, by Henry II.

THE GAZEBO, NETHER STOWEY.
From a sketch by the Author.

"Stowey a poore village standith yn a Botom emong Hilles," says Leland in a not altogether kind description of one of the largest places on the Quantocks. Entering from Bridgwater, we pass the church, and then see a conspicuously quaint sort of summer house over-

looking the road above a garden wall. This is the "Gazébo" (please pronounce all the syllables), belonging to Stowey court, where it is said that the ladies of the family used to sit to watch the Minehead coach go by, in those days of our great-grandmothers, when the Minehead coach was a matter of daily importance in the little world of Nether Stowey.

Down the side of the long street babbles a runlet of water, apostrophized by Coleridge in one of his letters as "the dear gutter of Stowey." Half-way up the town the road forks, but the main street is practically the Minehead road, Coleridge's house being the last on the left hand as one quits the town.

But we have come to stay: at the "George," or the "Rose and Crown," nice old-fashioned signs befitting these old-world comfortable "Inns" ('tis a pity that the French word "hotel" ever crept into rustic England). There are lodgings to be had in Coleridge's cottage—does any divine afflatus of that erratic genius linger there?

Nether Stowey possesses many more interests than the ordinary guide book would have us believe, and we are intent upon doing justice to this "poore village."

Some twelve years after Leland visited it a national fire-brand was born here in the person of a boy afterwards known as "Parsons the Jesuit." His birth was illegitimate, and it is asserted that his real name was "Cowbuck," his mother being the wife of the village blacksmith, while the surname he assumed, and the interest taken in him by the vicar of the parish aroused slanderous suggestions easily imagined, and unforgotten in four centuries. From childhood he shewed unusual talents, and the vicar having educated him, placed him at Balliol College. His career there did him little credit, and ended with his expulsion on plea of illegitimacy in 1574, when he immediately went abroad, joined the church of Rome, and became a Jesuit. Returning to England and assuming all manner of disguises he travelled from place to place, stirring up dissensions against Church and State, and threatening the life of Queen Elizabeth. His connection with Nether Stowey ended

Photograph] NEAR HARE KNAP, HOLFORD. [*Frith and Co.*

(*See page* 34).

with his birth and early education, and he contrived to escape the penalty of his treasons, dying at Rome in 1610.

Nether Stowey church was rebuilt in 1851, and almost the only old relics remaining there are the base of the churchyard cross, and the Perpendicular font with its cover of Jacobean wood carving. In the chancel, two mitres carved in wood stand on either side, beneath the tie beams of the ceiling: these commemorate two vicars of the parish who obtained bishoprics, Dr. Majendie, Bishop of Chester in 1800, and Dr. Fisher, Bishop of Exeter in 1803.

The most interesting object in the church is the mural tablet on the south wall to Mr. Thomas Poole, whose name is yet lovingly remembered in his native place, and whose acquaintance with many of the greatest notabilities of the early nineteenth century, brought these famous men to visit Nether Stowey. The inscription on the tablet is as follows:

"Sacred
To the memory of
Thomas Poole of Nether Stowey Esquire
For twenty years in the Commission of the Peace
for the County of Somerset
The beloved and lamented of many friends
A man not more distinguished for his masculine intellect
Than for integrity of life and inestimable qualities of heart
His originality and grasp of mind counterbalanced
The deficiences of early education and secured him the
Friendship of some of his most illustrious literary contemporaries.
Wordsworth and Davy, Southey and Coleridge
were his guests
And conferred distinction by their visits
on his native place
He was a patron of obscure merit
And the enlightened friend of the poor
Happy in the respect and affection of his neighbours
He studied to promote the welfare of mankind
And spent a long life in doing good
His death deprived a numerous acquaintance
Of a wise counsellor and faithful friend
And their durable regrets are the truest tribute to his worth.
He departed this life 5th September 1837 aged 72 years
And his remains are interred near this church."

Mr. Poole is buried under the large conifer on the

west side of the south door, the slab having his name and those of his father and mother; but the lettering is covered by the "fir needles" at all times and seasons.

Stowey Court, close by the church, was originally founded by Sir James Touchet, Lord Audley, in the fifteenth century. A couple of centuries later the house was garrisoned by the Cavaliers at the time of the siege of Bridgwater. All the village treasures were brought there for safety; among them the church registers, which were unfortunately lost or burnt during those troublous times.

A "Jubilee" clock tower stands at the fork of the two streets of which Nether Stowey consists, replacing the market cross which originally occupied the centre of the town; a building simpler in design but resembling in style the well-known cross at Dunster. Its destruction is more particularly to be regretted as there was upon it a sun-dial erected by Sir Humphrey Davy himself during one of his visits to Mr. Poole. The cross became ruinous, and was destroyed in a riot.

Ascending the street to the left of the town, the house on the north side, now a shop, was that once occupied by Mr. Poole, the garden walk leading to Coleridge's cottage being behind it. A little farther up, under an archway inscribed "Church of England School," is the school house erected by Mr. Poole in 1812, the date being placed over the doorway.

Ascending straight up the very steep hill, passing some cottages on the way, we presently find ourselves nearly at the top of the castle mound; a gateway on the right, close by a cottage, leading to the grassy rings and ramparts,—all that now remains of the ancient castle, built in the early Norman days by the head of the house of de Candos, held in succession by different families until the time of Henry VII, and then dismantled by Sir James Touchet, Lord Audley, to build the present manor house, already mentioned, near the church. His new building was never completed by him, for he headed the Western Rebellion in favour of Perkin Warbeck, which ended so disastrously at Blore Heath, and was executed on Tower Hill for his share in the

Drawn by] [*Geo. Pearl*

NETHER STOWEY. THE MAIN STREET.

rising. Forty years after his death, Leland saw the place, and wrote of the "goodly manor place of Lord Audley, standing exceeding pleasantly, having by it a parke of red deer and another of fallow." The new house was, however, strong enough to be of importance to the Cavaliers during the Great Rebellion, and it is probable that the last vestiges of the abandoned castle were destroyed at that date by the Parliamentary forces.

But antiquarian gleanings of a more or less shadowy nature are all that can be offered as a history of Nether Stowey castle. Upon the steep grass-grown sides, sheep are feeding, where once was fosse and bastion. On the very top are the foundations, excavated some years ago, either of castle or chapel, for it is asserted that a chapel, dedicated to S. Michael, crowned the top of the hill.

The view over the country eastward is very pretty, and when we have looked our fill, the cottage close by deserves attention: at each corner of the top of the walls is a grotesque head, evidently once a gurgoyle or corbel from the old building, the stones of which probably served to build the cottages in this locality. They are inhabited by a race of "Broom Squires," who for many years have settled here, the most noted character in the colony being known as "Trugg," who, in the hunting season, always drives home the cart with the slaughtered deer.

Descending from the castle and passing along the lane, a turning to the right leads to a narrow path, "Water Lane," which, like many Quantock ways, is presently usurped by the stream that babbles alongside, a narrow footway over the stile being the continuation of the walk.

A yard or two along, and a hollow, shaded by an oak tree, with some fragments of walls is all that remains of "Walford's cottage." Look up to the hills, beyond a little break there is a quarry, the site still known as "Walford's gibbet;" for the murderer's story is to-day yet fresh in the minds of Stowey, though the tragedy took place in the eighteenth century. Anyone will tell you the tale. How John Walford, the charcoal burner, in 1789, loved one girl yet married another; how his wife exasperated him by her behaviour until in despera-

tion he murdered her and flung her body into "Dead woman's ditch" on the hills.

Tried and found guilty he was condemned to be hung in sight of the scene, brought from Bridgwater gaol to Nether Stowey, where he ate his last breakfast in the house close to the clock tower, then an inn. And then we hear of the girl he had loved daring to accompany him in the cart to the very foot of the gibbet; hearing his last whispers, receiving his last kiss almost while the rope was round his neck.

Photograph] [*Bert Hole*

A QUANTOCK HIND. WILD RED DEER.

A story of love and crime remembered, though good deeds are forgotten: a shadow of evil never lifted from those ruined walls half hidden by rank nettles under that lonely tree.

The walk may be continued by turning to the left up the hill, the view overlooking the fields called "Five Lords," I believe, because five properties meet there.

Here the woods are most beautiful, sweeping down the hillsides in undulating shades of green.

At the top five lanes meet with a little grassy common in the centre: one road leads to Over Stowey; but, by continuing straight on, a stile and a field path will be seen on the left, which pass by Cross Farm, and some fir trees may be noticed on the hill side, which were a favourite resting place of Coleridge's. Before reaching the town another farm is passed, where the proprietor, Mr. Lansdowne, has a most interesting collection of antlers; many of them so weighty that one wonders how any creature so slender as a deer can bear to carry them. In a parlour carpeted with deer skin rugs is beautiful oak furniture, real Quantock oak that has never left the hills. Besides his collection of antlers, Mr. Lansdowne is at the time of writing studying their growth on the living person of a beautiful young stag, a proud graceful creature with a stately neck. There is also a tame hind, Nell, who has been a pet for many years, and though much older, is the best of friends with her antlered companion.

Danesborough, or Dowsboro', is the principal hill above Nether Stowey, and is easily ascended by following the Minehead road as far as the Castle of Comfort. Immediately beyond it turn in on the left, and follow the waggon track through the pinewood, going straight on until you come to a small pond; here turn to the left and follow the path through the wood, up the hill, when nearly at the top, a divergence to the right brings you to the summit finally crowned with a camp of which the enclosure is said to contain an area of ten acres, partly covered with the oak coppice that everywhere asserts itself.

The elevation is nearly eleven hundred feet, and the scenery is considered by some to be the finest view on the Quantocks. Indeed the story goes that Julius Cæsar, beholding the scene from his camp, cried "*Quantum ad hoc!*" (how much from here!) thus naming the hills. Unfortunately for tradition the camp is British, and Cæsar never came to make ponderous Latin puns on Somersetshire uplands.

The nearer heights hide Exmoor, save for Dunkery Beacon, and some of the loftier points. On the north gleams the glittering line of the Severn sea, backed by the Welsh mountains, and then the eye wanders farther and farther eastward, where the melting shadows open and let us look, not at the landscape, but right down the path of time, which has gradually stretched from east to west since the world began. There lie Bridgwater and Sedgemoor, there is Alfred's Athelney, and there against the Mendips, Glastonbury, with the most wonderful and saddest story in the history of England.

"The mighty majesty
Of that huge amphitheatre of rich
And elmy fields seems like society
Conversing with the mind and giving it
A livelier impulse and a dance of thought."

Strained with the effort of looking into those farthest mists, the eye returns to look nearer at the Quantock land spread at the feet, and, seeing it, one can sympathize with Coleridge's *Fears in Solitude* (from which the above lines are quoted) when on these hills, and looking at that scene he mused with dread on the possibilities of a foreign invasion and red war overrunning the peaceful prospect. The thought gave him a keener pang, for he could say as he looked downwards—

"And now beloved Stowey I behold
Thy church tower, and methinks the four huge elms,*
Clust'ring, which mark the mansion of my friend,
And close behind them, hidden from my view,
Is my own lowly cottage where my babe
And my babe's mother dwell in peace."

* The elms are now cut down.

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CHAPTER IV.

"THOMAS POOLE AND HIS FRIENDS."

Wordsworth. Coleridge. Alfoxton. Holford Combe. Spaxton. Enmore.

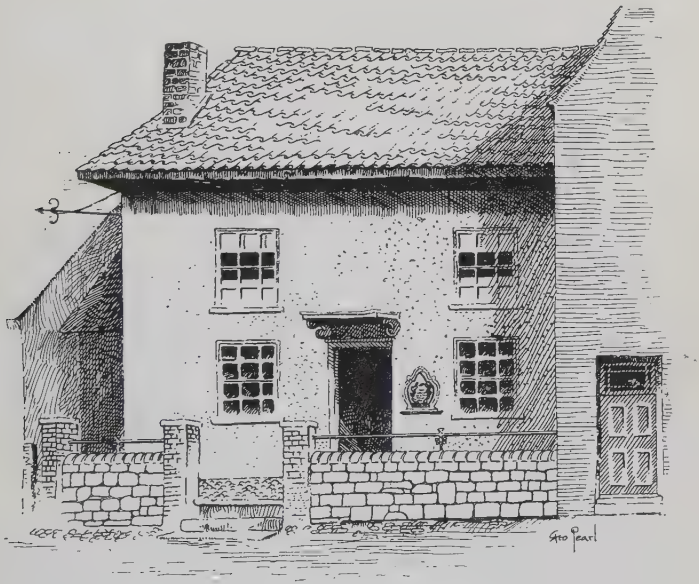
THE book to read at Nether Stowey is "Thomas Poole and his friends," by Mrs. Sandford, herself a descendant of the Poole family.

In this delightful volume of chat, letters, and journals, we get a complete picture of Nether Stowey society at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. There is the central figure of Tom Poole, partner in his father's tannery, denied the scholarly education of his cousins because old Mr. Poole did not consider scholarship necessary for a tanner. Yet Thomas was so determined to get knowledge, that he instructed himself in Latin, French and literature, and cultivated the keenest interest in the stirring events of his times.

Then we meet the group of cousins at Marsh-Mills, Over Stowey: John, the Fellow of Oriel, learned, stiff, and somewhat narrow-minded: and Charlotte, to whose journals the book owes so much, from those little sharp snappish utterances wherewith she criticizes Tom, his politics, his republican sentiments—specially displayed in his unpowdered hair—and his friends. Above all his friends! Those two unknown ones who, returning from a walking tour in Wales, came into the parlour and uttered such horrifying sentiments, that one almost seems to see John Poole's hair standing on end, when he wrote his opinions of them in Latin in his diary.

They were the then young undergraduates, Coleridge and Southey. A few years later Coleridge came with

his wife and infant son to the cottage at the end of the town, described in some of his letters as "a miserable hovel." It is an ugly house, enlarged since he had it, and tiles have replaced the thatched roof. For some time it was an inn, but the only relic of this left is the iron bar at the corner where the sign swung. A tablet near the door records that—



Drawn from a Sketch by the Author

COLERIDGE'S COTTAGE.

"Here Samuel Taylor Coleridge made his home 1797-1800."

Mrs. Coleridge must have endured the worst of the discomforts, for her husband could walk across the path into Tom Poole's garden, and thence into his friend's "book-room," at the back of the house.

It was when staying with Coleridge and his wife that

Dorothy Wordsworth wrote her oft-quoted description of the Quantock hills:

"There is everything here, the sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted, and William and I in a wander by ourselves found out a sequestered waterfall in a dell formed by steep hills covered with full grown timber trees."

This glen is at Holford, where Wordsworth shortly afterwards took the house known as Alfoxton (or Alfoxden) Manor.

Holford is some three miles from Stowey, on the Minehead road. The easiest way to find "Wordsworth's Glen" is to enquire at the Plough Inn, behind which a lane runs directly along the edge of the stream, and a gate leads at once to the picturesque rustic bridge now overlooking the waterfall. Two streams meet above the bridge, and at the angle formed by their junction lies a large square stone, which is still remembered as a favourite seat of Wordsworth's. A beautiful spot it is, deep and shady, full of the music of the water, and perhaps loveliest in spring when the banks are carpeted with primroses and wood anemones. A fitting scene for Wordsworth's *Lines written in Early Spring*, which may well have occurred to his thoughts here—where—

> "Through primrose tufts in that sweet bower
> The periwinkle trailed its leaves,
> And 'tis my faith that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes."

Crossing the bridge, the drive leads to the right directly to Alfoxton House, through the park where the fallow deer graze. The road is a public footpath, and can be followed until within sight of the house itself, if not beyond it and up the hill at the back. It is, however, better to return after a glimpse of the house and follow the drive to the left from the bridge until the wide entrance to one of the two combes belonging to Holford is reached, where stand two cottages on a bit of rough land. At the drive gate itself stands an old tower-like building which is worth notice, being a relic of the days of strict afforesting. It is a "dog-pound," once used for the incarceration of stray dogs, whose owners could

Photograph] **A QUANTOCK WATERFALL.** [*Frith and Co.*

HOLFORD GLEN.

identify them from horseback through the one slit which gives a view of the interior from the road.

One of the two cottages is tumbledown enough, the other completely ruinous. In one of these lived the old huntsman, Christopher Trickey, the original of Wordsworth's Simon Lee. It is impossible not to wish that Wordsworth had left him in his local surroundings in Somerset, instead of transplanting him to an imaginary scene in Cardigan. But, singularly enough, Wordsworth scarcely ever honours the Quantock Hills by name in his verses, though many of his poems are founded upon local incidents, and the volume of *Lyrical Ballads* was published in 1798, at the time when both the poets were residing in Somersetshire. "Surely," wrote Sir Walter Besant, "Wordsworth might have left some record of his stay, if only to shew that he could appreciate other scenery besides the lakes." And those who love the West Country cannot but feel a touch of irritation at his well-nigh contemptuous silence. For in truth one might wander far to find natural beauties more lovely than this combe near which he lived, with its dashing stream running down from the hills past a quaint octagonal cottage; beyond this the "bottom" grows narrower, the open land somewhat marshy, wood and stream hemming it in or either side. The grassy track winds on and on, the stream ripples by in silver threads, or curls under low bushes, where mossy dells seem to be made the special haunts of fairies. Presently a path on the northern side turns up-hill, and a steepish climb trends upwards till trees give place to heather, the open mountain side is attained, and the beautiful line of Holford Beeches marks another descent down-hill. These grand trees merit their celebrity: time has half dragged their roots from the ground, and the moss makes deep cushions under the spreading shade.

Just beyond them, almost on the summit of the hill, is a little red house, Alfoxton cottage, a delightful place for a summer holiday, for those who enjoy being on the breezy heights, and where one may have tea after a long ramble in the combes.

When following the path by the line of beeches, Alfox-

ton House, Wordsworth's residence, is very plainly visible among the trees. Many people have wondered how, not being a rich man, he could afford this country residence. He took it in 1797 furnished, at a yearly tenancy for £23 per annum during the minority of the owner. The rent seems ridiculously small, but money was of more value in those days. Here doubtless he would have stayed had not Thelwall, the republican, arrived at this arcadia, and drawn the suspicions of the government upon Stowey's group of friends. Coleridge's extravagant remarks about the French Revolution were not forgotten; Dorothy and William Wordsworth were wont to ramble the hills at all hours of day or night, and in every kind of weather. Suspicious habits these! And the owner of Alfoxton house was so much alarmed by the report of her tenants, that she refused to renew the lease. In 1798, Wordsworth had to quit the house; and Coleridge decided at the same time to leave Nether Stowey and visit Germany, leaving his wife and children at the cottage under the care of Mr. Poole.

The tower of Holford church is so curiously roofed that it looks like a windmill lacking sails rather than anything ecclesiastical. It stands half-way through the village, which winds on in a one-sided way up the first of the two combes which are the feature of the place. This is Holford Combe, properly speaking, but is more often known as the "Tannery combe," from the now disused tannery, which is the last building of the village hillward. It is a lovely valley, running into the hills south of the long hill which divides it from the wider combe, already mentioned as commencing opposite the Alfoxton drive gate, marked on the maps as "Hodder's combe," but generally known as "Butterfly combe," or wrongly enough, but *par excellence* as the most visited, as "Holford combe." Both combes present the same features, alike, yet ever varying, though the tannery combe is more boggy than its sister, and can be very wet indeed after heavy rains. But the botanist will find it rich in flowers, especially marsh plants, and in early summer the broad patches of water forget-me-not lie under the sun as if a bit of the blue sky overhead had

Drawn from *a Sketch by the Author*

IN HOLFORD VILLAGE.

floated down and rested in this hollow of the hills.

Up the narrow neck of the hill between the two combes runs a smooth, broad path of untold age, the "hare-knap," so called since the days when it was the way of the war-host across the hills from west to east, the name meaning "the ridge of the army." Why it was a chosen warpath is evident enough if it is followed to its ending at Holwell to the westward, for it lies on the open ridge right across the hills, and no attack could be made unsuspected on a marching host. Another old war trail leads straight up to Dowsborough camp from the lane leading back to the high road to Stowey behind the church.

The hill on which the beeches line the course of the old coach road above Alfoxton house, is Longstone hill, the third highest summit of the Quantocks. The ancient fallen menhir, whence the name, may be found by the side of a green tract leading toward the hilltop from the last of the beech trees, and thence it is worth while to go on to the highest point itself for the sake of a wonderful and altogether unexpected view over Watchet bay to Dunster and Exmoor, with Dunkery beacon towering over the nearer hills as background, and the purple headland of Minehead half blocking the view of the Porlock heights across the bay to the right. Not far hence on the hill side to the south is the hearth of an ancient beacon, the only one still known as the "fire-beacon" by the folk. It is placed in the one position whence it is possible to see eastward the great ridge of Long-down, in Wilts, at the head of what was once Selwood forest, while at the same time its fires would be unseen from anywhere on the nearer hills across the Parrett. The beacon was evidently planned for communication with a gathering at some point close to Long down; and a point close by that hill having been the meeting place of Alfred's forces before the decisive battle of Ethandune, it is probable that hence he and his earl, Odda (whose name "Hodder's combe" preserves even yet), kept up communications at the time, unknown to the men of Guthrum who were gathered at Edington on the Poldens. There are many other beacon sites on

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

AT THE AGE OF 26.

From a portrait that originally belonged to his friend,
Thomas Poole of Nether Stowey.

the Quantocks, but some such specially remembered use of this one has fixed its name in the memory of the countryside.

Like birds of passage the poets drifted away from Quantock Land; but Thomas Poole remained, growing yearly in the esteem of his fellow townsfolk and all who came in contact with him. Among other benefits which he bestowed on Stowey was the Women's Club, an institution which still flourishes. It was founded as a mutual benefit society in 1807, and is one of the first women's clubs established in this country.

Coleridge was staying with his friend when it was inaugurated, and wrote the motto displayed upon its banner:

"Foresight and Union
Linked
By Christian Love,
Helped by the Good below
And Heaven Above."

The annual meeting is held on the Friday after the First Sunday after Trinity, when the members, each bearing a bouquet, march to church, the banner borne by some maiden of the parish; service over, they march round the village. A tea is given, followed by sports and dancing in a meadow, to which last the inferior sex are admitted by their lady friends. It is a happy meeting, shared by gentle and simple, the richer residents in the neighbourhood marching in the procession with their children, so that everyone in Nether Stowey from their earliest years has learnt to appreciate Mr. Poole's institution. The Club funds are allowed to accumulate until they reach a certain sum which is then shared among the members, and joyous indeed is that club feast when a "distribution" is announced."

On the way to Over Stowey, a mile from Nether Stowey, we pass Marsh Mills, a house standing at the corner of four cross roads. It is now the residence of the Misses Ward, daughters of Mr. Poole's friend and partner; ladies whose personal reminiscences of Coleridge, Mr. Poole, and other well-known individuals, forms a link between the twentieth century and the now

historic past. Though the house has been somewhat altered, the dining-room is that very parlour, where, in 1794, those two strangers from Wales arrived at the same time that John Poole came in to tell his family of the death of Robespierre, and Southey, laying his head on his arms upon the table, wept, or pretended to weep, exclaiming, "I would as soon have heard of the death of my father!"

Mrs. Sandford conjectures that the extravagantly republican remarks, made that day by Southey and

Drawn from a Sketch by the Author

MARSH MILLS, OVER STOWEY.

Here Coleridge and Southey first heard of the death of Robespierre.

Coleridge, were uttered simply that the two university men might amuse themselves by astonishing the natives.

They succeeded only too well, leaving an impression that was never effaced.

Little did any of them guess that after more than a century had passed, the portrait of Coleridge, sent by him from Germany to Tom Poole, would hang over the parlour mantelpiece, one of the most valued possessions

of the house. Another interesting picture is an etching of the old Market Cross at Nether Stowey, already alluded to; and in the hall hangs a very remarkable barometer, of unusual shape, that belonged to Mr. Poole.

Over Stowey church is small, with good ancient carved bench-ends. In the north aisle the east and west windows of coloured glass are from designs by Burne-Jones, and were both erected in memory of the Hon. Henry Labouchere, Lord Taunton, born in 1797, died 1869. He is also commemorated by a mural tablet. A memorial window has recently been added by Mr. E. J. Stanley, M.P., of Quantock Lodge, in memory of his eldest son, Mr. H. T. Stanley, who was killed in action while serving as a Yeomanry officer in the Boer War. A fine XVIII century brass candelabra, made at Bridgwater, hangs in the church.

Before concluding our reminiscences of "Tom Poole and his friends," we should make an expedition through Spaxton to Enmore, neither of them places which can actually claim to belong to the Quantock district.

John Poole was given the Rectory of Enmore in 1803, and the Poole cousins removed from Marsh Mills to live there.

One of the prettiest ways of reaching these places is to go as far as Quantock Lodge from Over Stowey, and follow the private road on the left through this side of the park. The lodge-keeper at the other end will direct to the turning for Spaxton, which is not far off.

Another route, or a return route, would be to turn for Spaxton at the sign-post on the Bridgwater road.

Spaxton church is very fine: a fifteenth century cross, somewhat broken, stands in the churchyard. The lofty tower is ornamented with the corbelled heads of kings and bishops, and completed with a parapet table pierced in quatrefoils. Over the south porch is a parvise chamber. The bench-ends are particularly rich, even in this land of carved benches: one of them is known as "The Fuller," depicting the workman and his implements. On the north side of the chancel are the recumbent figures of a knight and lady.

Where the road divides on entering the village the

way to the left should be taken for Enmore. There is a sign-post farther on. In going this way we pass the "Agapemone" belonging to the "Princeites," as the sect is locally called, from the late founder, Mr. Prince. The building is enclosed within a wall, and is easily recognized by the flagstaff at the end of the chapel roof, supported by a lion rampant. It has its own burial ground, where the members are buried upright that they may be found standing ready on the Day of Judgment.

Photograph] [*Mr. Page*

THE FULLER'S PANEL.

On a Bench end at Spaxton.

Enmore church is prettily situated at the head of the park. A broken cross shaft remains in the churchyard, and there is a fine Norman door inside the south porch. Thomas Poole was extremely fond of visiting his cousin here, and in 1807, during the last visit paid by Coleridge to Stowey, the poet wrote some jesting lines relating to the "gëorgoepiscopal" (farm and church) walks upon which he accompanied his friend, when Mr. Poole would stop to look at this field or that, and

almost always contrived to reach Enmore at last.

"Relative to a friend remarkable for Gëorgoepiscopal meanderings and the combination of the *utile dulci* during his walks to and from any given place: composed, together with a book and a half of an Epic poem, during one of the HALTS.

Lest after this life it should prove my sad story
That my soul must needs go to the Pope's Purgatory,
Many prayers have I sighed, may T—— P—— be my guide,
For so often he'll halt, and so lead me about,
That ere we get there, through earth, sea, or air,
The Last Day will have come, and the fires be put out!

P.S. Shortly will be published a new road map of the country between N. Stowey and Enmore, comprising many pleasant new roads from the former to the latter, by way of Ferriton, Fairfield, Cummage—etc."

Needless to say that the last-named places are nowhere in the direction of Enmore.

In 1810 Mr. John Poole founded one of the first elementary schools for educating the village children, and argued warmly to prove that it was worth while to teach them "writing and arithmetick as well as grammar," though admitting that persons might be inclined "to question the propriety of introducing the higher rules of arithmetick and English grammar." What would his opinion now be of modern "elementary education?"

It was his interest in John Poole's school endeavours which led Wordsworth to write in the "Excursion"—

"Oh, for the coming of that glorious time
When prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
And best protection, this imperial realm
While she exacts allegiance shall admit
An obligation on her part to teach
Them who are born to serve her and obey:
Binding herself by statute to secure
For all the children whom her soil maintains
The rudiments of letters and inform
The mind with moral and religious truth." (Book IX.)

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CHAPTER V.

HILL AND VALE:

Cocker Combe. Triscombe Stone. Wills Neck. Adscombe. Seven Wells Combe.

BEYOND Over Stowey lie the two largest combes of the Quantocks, Cocker Combe and Seven Wells Combe. The former is the most important and perhaps the finest of all these wooded openings. To reach it we must make our way along the Taunton road beyond the great gates of Quantock Lodge, soon after which a lane appears turning up upon the right. This leads directly into the combe, and passes right through it. For some little way a stream runs along the side of the lane, this crossed, the roadway, broad enough for small vehicles, gradually rises, winding terrace-like up the hill side, shaded, but affording glimpses down the long wooded slopes across to the opposite woodlands, while the stream cleaves the middle of the valley.

Through Cocker Combe is the most direct and certainly the pleasantest way of reaching Triscombe Stone and ascending Wills Neck.

The path emerges at last upon the open down, and needs but to be followed to its very end, and through a moor gate, just opposite to which is Triscombe Stone.

Let not the explorer imagine that in this popular landmark he is going to see a mighty boulder or important menhir towering in solitary grandeur above the waste. Triscombe Stone might be passed unobserved by any wanderer unaware of its existence, and those who go and look for it may come away wondering whether they have not failed to see it after all. It is merely a lump of shabby limestone on the grass, close to the rough track that descends to Blue Ball and

Crowcombe, and hardly as large as an ordinary milestone.

Here the opening meet of the Staghounds always takes place, on which occasion Triscombe Stone is a scene of liveliness and activity, the open moorland crowded with vehicles, horses, dogs, pedestrians; all

Photograph] [*Frith and Co.*

A WOODLAND PATHWAY IN COCKER COMBE.

gathered to see the sport, whether members of the hunt or not—for these are the great festivities of Quantock land. At other seasons Triscombe Stone is absolutely

lonely, not a soul in sight, unless some labourer from Quantock Farm comes jogging along the lane to Crowcombe.

From here Wills Neck rises to the end of its 1261 feet in a long easy slope, threaded by a track over the heather, easily followed until the highest tumulus is reached; discernible, not only from the stones at its top, but by the charred spots and debris that mark the fires and feasts of picnic parties. There are several tumuli in sight, grass-grown tumps that cover the tombs of unknown dead. All, or nearly all, have been examined, and those who wish to know more than I have space here to tell of their archæological interest, should read Mr. Page's *Exploration of Exmoor and the Highlands of West Somerset*, where the subject is fully treated. The name "Wills Neck" means the ridge of the Welshmen," the Wealas of our Saxon forefathers, who made the tumuli.

The track by which we made our way to the summit is of interest, being of great antiquity, and threading the ridge of the Quantocks all the way across from Cothelstone on the south, directly to Wills Neck, and thence, though less distinctly traceable, to the seaward end of the hills. Those who know the Malvern Hills will recall the celebrated "ditch" cut on their summit to separate the dioceses of Hereford and Worcester. The Quantock track must be far more ancient, though its origin and originators can only be subjects for archæological conjecture.

The breadth and beauty of the scene surrounding Wills Neck may well be imagined, and hardly needs particularizing. The country that we have seen in patchwork, lies all round us. Taunton Deane, Exmoor, Devon, Wales, Somerset to its utmost boundary, and even beyond into Wilts and Dorset. Behind and beyond us stretch the Quantock ridges, and the wooded combes slope away on either hand. Westward, on one of those clear days which go before bad weather as a rule, it is possible to make out the dim outline of Dartmoor, with Yes Tor as its highest landmark.

There are many ways of returning. The rough steep

Photograph] INTERIOR OF OVER STOWEY CHURCH. [*Frith and Co*

(*See page* 37).

road that runs abruptly down-hill from Triscombe Stone will take us to Blue Ball, a hamlet of a few cottages and an inn, and thence to the high road for Bagborough and Crowcombe on the western side of the hills. But this we shall see later. Or we may return through the moor gate, and get across into Seven Wells Combe, more difficult to reach this way by those who are unfamiliar with the country. On retracing the road through Cocker Combe some little way, we shall find a path, diverging by a gate, which will take us across an open bit of moor called Florey Down, whence a way descends through the woods, here sometimes named Hunters' Combe, where we shall pass the kennels and presently find ourselves close to Quantock Lodge, though not actually in sight of the house. Quantock Lodge was built by Lord Taunton, and is now the residence of Mr. E. J. Stanley, M.P. for the Bridgwater Division, whose wife (the Hon. Miss Labouchere) was heiress of the property, and whose son, Mr. E. A. V. Stanley, J.P., is master of a pack of staghounds.

Our road will bring us out close to some cottages with gay gardens that stand beside the park gates; before us are several lanes ascending to Over Stowey or threading the valleys, and Marsh Mills may be observed at the top of the hill near the corner of the road.

We are in truth close to the lane that will lead us into Seven Wells Combe, which lies hidden away among the hills quite invisible to the ken of the stranger.

From Over Stowey it may be reached either by descending the road that turns down to the right beyond Marsh Mills, or by a field path near the church. In either case the road reaches this corner, readily distinguished by the pond and mill leat. The stream now shews us the way, and what better guide could we have than this chattering brook that ripples down the lane "in brambly wildernesses?"

Before we reach the entrance to the combe, and the group of houses forming the hamlet of Adscombe, we must note the ruin of Adscombe chapel. It is easily found. A broad driving road marked by white gates leads into Quantock Park: across the field on the right-

hand side the ruin stands up against the sky, half sheltered by a group of trees.

It is but a fragment, and must have been but a tiny chantry at best. Now there are traces of walls, an arched doorway, a window above, and that is all. The chapel and manor of Adscombe belonged to Athelney Abbey, and appear to have been given to that foundation by Ethelred the Unready. The present ruins, of course, are of much later date, showing the familiar Perpendicular style of the west in the shattered remains that are the more ruinous from having been built of the crumbling limestone of the district.

Behind the farmhouse at Adscombe, the lane leads into Seven Wells Combe. It is marked "Private road," but no objection is made to anyone traversing it, these notices in the Quantock district being the landowner's assertion of "right of way," rather than intended to hinder the rambler's progress. They may also represent a mute appeal to tourists to keep gates shut, and respect natural beauties, ferns, and flowers; a respect I trust every one will try and feel, lest in self-defence these gentle notices are fiercely altered into "Trespassers will be prosecuted!"

The topography of the locality will be best understood, when it is realised that Quantock Park lies wedgelike, between Cocker Combe and Seven Wells. As we walk up this latter, the park paths and woodlands rise on the other side across the broad bottom of the combe.

Both in Cocker Combe and Seven Wells there is a chance of getting a glimpse of the red deer. It is by no means uncommon to see them resting under the trees, even as many as eight at a time, or more.

They are such beautiful creatures that one feels it is almost wrong to hunt them, but I think it may be fairly said to have this "use," paradoxical as it seems: were it not for their preservation as objects of sport, many of our wild animals would entirely perish, being destroyed as injurious, or driven out by the perpetual increase of civilization, culture of land, and building. This would certainly be the case with the red deer, who do great

Photograph] [*Frith and Co.*

SEVEN WELLS COMBE.

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damage among the crops, and even in gardens, and yearly cost the sportsmen a considerable amount in compensation to the farmers.

Seven Wells Combe is the wildest of all. Here the path is rougher, and the woodland more tangled. The stream rushes along under the shadows, for the trees arch closely overhead. The slopes are closely covered with slender trunks, and deep in leaf mould, the "bottom" damp and broken. Some distance up there is a little well, stone covered and mossy, a sacred well, dedicated, perhaps to St. Anne, or St. Agnes. Several other wells or springs can be traced. Whether there were originally seven wells in the combe I do not know, it seems to be an extremely ancient name of the valley.

Almost at the end of the combe there is a gamekeeper's house, where a route back through Quantock Park may be enquired for, or by emerging upon the open hill side we can walk back through Cocker Combe. The walk from Nether Stowey up and down either of the combes, and to Triscombe Stone, is between four and five miles, and probably quite nine, if not ten, miles would be covered by adding the ascent to Wills Neck, and walking both ways. The cyclist can save a great deal of distance by leaving the bicycle either at Adscombe, or at the cottage at the foot of Cocker Combe. To ride up this last would be scarcely worth while, but it is quite possible to ride all the way down as the descent is nowhere steep.

Mention must be made of the fine carriage-way, known as "Labouchere's Drive," skirting the southern side of the combe, and commanding magnificent views of the woods. It is a favourite return drive from the head of Cocker Combe.

It is scarcely necessary to add that rambles among the combes are practically inexhaustible. All that one feels after a visit to any one of them is that one knows "something about the hills," we have had a glimpse of their beauties, a taste of their delights. Nature reveals herself slowly, she will not draw aside her veil too soon, we must know her intimately before we can declare that we have seen her, face to face.

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CHAPTER VI.

STOKE COURCY AND ITS CASTLE.

AT the foot of the Quantocks on the eastern side are a group of parishes connected, by proximity or association, with the hills that rise some three or four miles beyond them.

Of these the largest and most interesting is Stogursey, or Stoke Courcy: the latter being the ancient name and still in frequent use, while it is usually printed in the debased form Stogursey on the maps.

Stoke Courcy is three miles from Nether Stowey, the direct road turning to the right at the top of the hill beyond Coleridge's cottage. If we wish to take Fiddington on the way we must quit Nether Stowey by the Bridgwater road, and about a mile down it turn to the left near a blacksmith's forge. This will bring us to Fiddington, and on to Stoke Courcy by a winding indifferent road, pretty enough where it runs under the trees. By this route the three miles become nearly six, and Fiddington, it must be admitted, is hardly worth the extra distance. It is a fair-sized village, with a pretty pond, near which stands the church, where we shall see nothing of notable interest, except the fragment of a churchyard cross overgrown with ivy.

Stoke Courcy is quite a little town, spread on rising ground, white houses all glittering in the sunshine, dominated by the church with its central tower and dwarf spire.

Hither we first turn our steps. The exterior of the building hardly suggests the interests within, as it is "rough cast" outside with plaster, which always detracts from architectural effect.

There is a north porch, with a parvise over it, but we shall find the west door always open.

The interior of the building, which was restored by the Bristol Merchant Venturers and the late Sir Alexander Hood, shews nave, north and south transepts, and a chancel with north and south choir aisles. The font is very early Norman, if not of Saxon work, circular, with the typical cable twist round the centre, and ornamented on the sides with four rudely carved faces. Probably it is one remnant of a still earlier church than the Norman present building, the stone being wrought with the axe instead of the chisel. Two rough heads of the same work are built up into the keystone of the arches in the chancel, and the small window in the chancel, to be noticed presently, may belong to the same earliest building. The nave dates only from the fifteenth century, and has a panelled arch at the north-east, where formerly was the rood-loft stairway. The ancient carved bench ends are preserved, in common with the neighbouring churches. But, the moment one enters, the eye is captured by the splendid double Norman arches between nave and chancel, which, with the massive transeptal arches of the same period, bear up the central tower; while on either side the remarkably large chancel is divided from its aisles by two more Norman arches, rendering the entire east end of this country church one of the finest examples of Norman work in the country.

The carvings on the capitals are extremely rich: upon one on the north side there is a spirited representation of a horse, and the soffits of the arches are decorated with carved mouldings of the typical Norman patterns. This Norman church is believed to have been built by William de Falaise himself, a relative of the Conqueror, and ancestor of the de Courcys, who afterwards possessed the place, and added their own name to its simple Saxon title of Stoke, signifying a place fortified by stockades, proving that Stoke Courcy was always a little more important than the villages near it.

The Falaise family also founded the Priory, to which they attached their church; a door blocked up in the south transept was formerly the entrance by which the monks came into church from the Priory buildings that lie behind it. A large iron ring in the base of a pillar in

the south transept has been a subject for conjecture; it is supposed to have been used to attach a rope to the great bell in the tower overhead that it might be rung inside the church as a Sanctus bell. The tower is now ceiled over so as to form a belfry chamber.

The south choir aisle is known as the Verney aisle, and contains two altar tombs to the family of Verney of Fairfield, both with recumbent effigies. The lower of these is said to represent Sir Ralph Verney, who died in 1352: this is very simple. The other, far more elaborate, is that of Sir John Verney, who died in the reign of Henry VI (1422—1461). His head rests on a helmet and crest, his feet on a dog. The base of the tomb is carved with niches filled by saints, one, though broken, recognizable as St. Christopher. On the edge of the moulding are shields of arms, those of the Verneys—"three ferns"—shewing that these ancient knights spoke the good old "Zummerset" dialect, and called them "verns." The other shields have arms of family alliances: the "Wyvern" of Brent; "three arrows," Risdon; and "Three stags' heads," Broughton of Sandford. The piscina in this aisle denotes that there was another altar here; at present a large and very heavy stone stoup has been put in it, which was found among some fragments from the church. The north choir aisle, now filled with the organ, was also a chapel, with its piscina still existing; this chapel was dedicated to St. Erasmus.

The most ancient part of the chancel is a lancet window in the south wall, the splay of which is remarkable for its depth. A figure of St. Andrew, patron of the church, in modern glass, has been placed in it.

Though the exterior of the church has been marred by the plastering outside, it is worth while to walk round it, and note on the north side the little chamber above the vestry, and the path to the Priory.

Of this the only portion left is the Priory barn, a circular building standing prominently above the church; the rest of the place is entirely altered and turned into a farm.

Wherever the Norman Barons came they built themselves a castle, and, judging by its ruins, that of Stoke

Photograph] **ALFOXTON HOUSE, HOLFORD.** [*Frith and Co.*

The temporary residence of Wordsworth in the year 1797. (*See page* 32).

Courcy must have been of considerable strength. To find it we must turn to the left, after leaving the church, and make our way towards a mill: this is Fiddington Lane, but our path will lead us above it, by the mill leat and across a stile, when the castle ruins come in sight. But before we get as far we pass one of the most notable objects in Stoke Courcy: this is an ancient bell, hanging on some almshouses originally founded by Sir William Poulet in the reign of Henry V. One of the rules of the establishment was that the bell should be rung twice daily to call the inmates to prayer. What the other injunctions of the ancient foundation were, I know not, but for five hundred years, at six in the morning and six in the evening the bell has sounded; no wonder that it is known as the "Ding-dong Darling!"

Originally the castle, if strong, cannot have been very large, the moat still existing to shew its full extent. The eminence on which the ruin stands is not very high, the slopes and lower ground now being covered with orchard trees, underneath which cattle and sheep feed peaceably. The broad piece of meadow land in front of the entrance gates is still called "the war meadow," and was probably the tiltyard, unless the name records some such attack on the place as that traditionally made by the Stowey men, of which no written record remains. A cottage now occupies the position of the entrance gate, with a rustic bridge thrown across the inner moat. We can circle the outer wall of the castle by a rough track, but it is best seen from inside, and, as we knock at the cottage door, we perceive that it is made like a real castle door, with a grille for those within to see who is knocking before they open. The kitchen, too, on the right hand, is a quaint old bit formed from the ancient wall.

Technically, the castle was incomplete, consisting of no more than the bailey; and even now the local name for the stronghold is not "the castle," but quite correctly, "the bailey." Only a terribly illdrawn eighteenth century picture remains of the place as it has been, but one may gather from it that the walls have crumbled little in the last century or so. Still, beyond the moat

there have been formidable earthworks, which, when crested with an oaken stockading, would be strong enough in all conscience. It is most probable that the site is that of the original timber hall and "ham" of the Saxon Thane who first owned the village and manors, and gave the simple name of "The Stoke" to the place. Now the shattered and ivy-grown fragments of a once formidable fortress serve but to guard a cottager's garden.

Of the passing of the land from the family of Falaise to that of Courcy there seems to be no record; probably it was through the marriage of an heiress.* We seem at first to hear of it as the property of Robert and William de Courcy, stewards to the Empress Maud and Henry II. The most important member of the family was John de Courci, born about 1152, a notable historic character, endowed by tradition with those titanic characteristics legend loves to associate with her heroes.

Thus a vessel of bell metal, holding five pints and weighing nearly ten pounds, which was found near the castle, was asserted to be the breakfast cup of John de Courcy, who seems, by all accounts, to have been a mighty trencher-man as well as a tremendous fighter.

He is best known as the first Earl of Ulster, and connected, historically, with Ireland, rather than Somerset, though it is probable that it was from the little port at Stolford on the Severn Sea, in Stoke Courcy parish, that he started with his knights for that conquest of Ireland which ended in his being made Baron of Kinsale, and claiming from King John the right to stand covered in the presence of his monarch; a right still belonging to the Barony of Kinsale, the oldest Barony in Ireland.

But while John de Courcy was subduing the Irish, his castle in Somerset was held by Fulke de Breaute, a follower of Prince John's, who had married Alice, de Courcy's sister, the widowed Countess of Devon.

Fulke de Breaute not only held Stoke Courcy Castle in right of his wife, but when John came to the throne, induced that prince to assign him the property; John

* The castle cannot be traced farther back than Henry II's reign, 1154, though it may be older.

de Courcy being then imprisoned for having defended the cause of Prince Arthur of Brittany. Fulke de Breaute, who has been described as "a ferocious and sanguinary ruffian," garrisoned the castle, and by perpetual acts of violence made the place "such a greivance to the country," that in the next reign (Henry III) the Sheriff was ordered by an express writ from the King to destroy it, and Fulke only escaped with his life because he had assumed the Cross, and, being exiled from England, started for the Crusades, though he never went beyond Rome, where he made some vain appeals to the Pope for restitution of his wife and lands.

In the reign of Edward the First the castle belonged to Robert Fitzpaine, and from him, with the title of Lord Fitzpaine, descended to Eleanor, wife of Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. In 1457 it was surprised and burnt by Lord Bonville, and has been in ruins ever since, though the property remained in the possesssion of the Percies till 1682.

We are not surprised to hear that there was an underground passage from the Castle to the Priory; traditions of such passages are connected with every old building in the country: this one really existed, and was open on the Priory side in the eighteenth century.

Returning from the castle into the town we can make our way up the street past the stump of the old market cross, and then turn down to St. Andrew's well, restored by the late Sir Peregrine Acland. On the exterior of the archway are the Hood arms: inside a much older shield has been built into the wall. The deliciously cold water gushes from two spouts. and it is said that no one knows exactly whence it comes.

Stoke Courcy once possessed the privileges of a borough, which however became so utterly effete that we are told they used to have a farcical election of a mayor, who after being chosen was thrown into the mill pond!

Few places retain so distinctly the marks of successive historical epochs. The unusual position of the churchyard cross to the north of the building seems to suggest

that here is the site of the first baptisms of the heathen forefathers of the village in the brook that runs close below; the Saxon "stoke" succeeded by the Norman castle with its church and priory; the almshouses founded by three different charities, both before and after the Reformation; and now possessing an extremely excellent school of which it is particularly proud. This stands close to the Vicarage, and the handsome modern building is a worthy successor of the other architectual interests of the town.

We must not quit Stoke Courcy without finding our way along the street that leads eastwards, passing some almshouses, lately rebuilt, but of old endowment. The lane gradually diminishes into a raised pathway, where the stream usurps the lane, fordable for carts, and crossed by little footbridges, until a raised path runs by the water, finally reaching Water Farm, one of the most picturesque places imaginable, where the house is built on bridges over the water.

On the way between Stoke Courcy and Stringston, we pass Fairfield, a large Elizabethan mansion, standing in its park. This was anciently the manor of the Verneys, the house being rebuilt in the sixteenth century. It looks somewhat lonely as we glance back at it from the road, a quiet place, like the quiet little town we have just quitted; once the centre of a stirring past, and now stranded, well-nigh forgotten, on the shoals of the stream of time.

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CHAPTER VII.

DODINGTON, STRINGSTON, KILTON, LILSTOCK.

ON the way from Nether Stowey to Holford we have already passed Dodington Well, on the hill-top, and Castle of Comfort close by; where is the post office, and where very pleasant lodgings are to be had, or lunch or tea after a ramble on the hills.

Until you have visited Dodington it is rather a puzzle to discover it. True, the place is marked on the map, and discussed by people whom you meet. But of all the Quantock villages this is perhaps the most non-existent. A tiny weather-beaten church, sheltered by trees, and hidden under the hills, the beautiful old Hall close by, the Rectory, a cottage or two; these, enfolded in the woods and hills, render Dodington more than any other spot endued with the spirit of the Quantock land: it is the Quantock land itself.

The lane running straight down from Castle of Comfort leads, on turning to the right, to the church and Dodington Hall, which is just beyond it.

It is this beautiful old Elizabethan manor house that we shall specially wish to visit; the old home of the Dodingtons, now occupied as a farm. The front, with its gables and Tudor windows, faces an open space, and a double flight of steps leads to the entrance.

Above the door is a curious carving of a giant's head with a child in its mouth, and as we wait to enter we shall note that the passage across to the garden is all lined with dark oak.

Visitors are kindly admitted, a small donation to foreign missions being requested in return for the courtesy. The

great hall was restored by the late Sir Alexander Acland Hood, the family arms being placed on tiles in the centre of the floor. The open timbered roof of oak is supported upon corbels carved with angels. On one side stands the minstrels' gallery, resting upon a solid oak screen, and opposite is a very fine chimney piece of the date 1581. The sides are supported by caryatides in the form of monsters, half lion, half human; above them are panels, the centre shewing the arms and quarterings of the Dodingtons, with the motto, "Support thy Patrimonie." An injunction which, judging by the degeneration of this beautiful house into a farm, seems to have been neglected. Inside this hall is a delightful parlour, with the long low Tudor window, which is so particularly picturesque, dark oak panelling, and old-fashioned furniture; an ideal room, suggesting a thousand thoughts of former times. In the windows, both of this room and the hall, are armorial bearings in the old glass; the arms—"argent, three bugle horns sable"—being those of the Dodingtons. The Dodingtons held the manor in the 12th century; they were a Norman family and adopted the name of the land. The most notable of them was Sir Francis Dodington, Sheriff of Somerset in the reign of Charles I, and a supporter of the King's party throughout the civil war.

During the Commonwealth he lived in great poverty abroad, where it is said he supported himself by selling knives and buckles, until a wealthy French widow lady married him. He already had a son by a first wife, who took the Parliamentary side, and was secretary to Thurlow.

This may perhaps have occasioned a certain distrust the Royal party seems to have felt towards Sir Francis, who, after the Restoration, lived extremely privately at Dodington, and never attempted to obtain any redress from the Crown for the impoverishing of his estates during the war. This branch of the Dodington family became extinct at the end of the eighteenth century, and the present owner of the estates is Sir Alexander Acland Hood.

A path from the Hall leads to the Church of All

Saints, upon which may be observed the arms of the Dodingtons. The shaft of the cross remains in the churchyard, and the building is small, rough cast, and extremely weather beaten. On the mouldings of the tower window may be seen the corbelled heads of Henry IV, and Joan of Navarre, frequently introduced on Perpendicular architecture of the fifteenth century, and denoting the date of erection. In the porch is a beautiful stoup, carved on the sides with quatrefoils. The interior of the church does not present many features of interest. Some fragments of ancient glass in the east window show the heads of our Lord and the Virgin. The south chapel, built in the seventeenth century, was the burial place of the Dodington family.

The parish is not large, and at the end of the nineteenth century the population was reckoned as being about one hundred.

Mining for copper was carried on at Dodington within comparatively recent times.

Behind and around Castle of Comfort there are the most lovely paths on the hills: notably the "Beechen grove," which comes close down upon the high road, and seems with a thousand leafy voices to call us to turn our steps aside and ramble down the stately avenues, or rest under the shady trees. We may wander in what direction we will, these rambles will be called by some "all just alike:" the true lover of the country knows they are all different. He who comes to the Quantock land must bring powers of interest and observation with him, for here Nature does not compel his admiration by bold display, but has all the shy beauties of the sylvan Faun.

This higher Minehead road is comparatively new: the old road was that at the foot of the hill on which we have already been when visiting the hall and church. If, instead of going to the right, we go leftwards we shall presently find ourself at Stringston, where the church, with its whitewashed tower surmounted by a red tiled spire, looks as if it had been "made in Germany," and dropped out of a toy box upon its present site; so much does it resemble the little red and white village churches

of the "Fatherland." There is a very beautiful fifteenth century cross in the churchyard, with the figures under the canopy in remarkable preservation. In the porch may be observed the fragments of a stoup that has been cut away.

Quitting Stringston and continuing along the level road we finally reach a crossway, and may turn to the right up Kilton Hill.

Photograph] [*Mr. J. C. Shuffrey*

"THE CASTLE OF COMFORT," DODINGTON.

Many times have we studied the surrounding scenery from the Quantocks: now we may pause for a moment and note the hills themselves, for the whole length of the narrow ridge crossing the country lies before us.

On the extreme south is Cothelstone Beacon; East Quantoxhead at the northern end; Danesborough rises conspicuous among the heights; and from here the group known as the Camels assumes most markedly the aspect of its other name, "waggon and horses."

Turning round and looking eastward over Bridgwater, we may note in the distance to the right the little mission chapel of Stolford, replacing the ancient chapel of St. Michael, long since destroyed together with all the importance of this once busy port connected by association with the Quantock land; for doubtless it was from Stolford that John de Courcy embarked for Ireland, and many other adventurers in after years made their way thence down the Severn Sea. As part of the parish of Stoke Courcy, and intimately associated with its former history, Stolford deserves a brief mention; perhaps its present interests belong to a period more distant still; as the geologist will there find that the beach forms part of the submerged forest of Bridgwater Bay.

Beyond Stolford the land stretches eastward in a long tongue of rich pasture to the mouth of the Parrett at Steart Point, beyond which the houses at Burnham seem close at hand. The impassable tidal waters of the river are almost invisible from here, and unless their course has already been realized from the hill tops, whence it lies traced as on a map at one's feet, it is more than possible, and indeed quite a common mistake, for a stranger to try to cycle directly through Stockland and Steart to Burnham, or even to Weston, only to find it lost labour. The nearest possible crossing place is at Combwich, where there is a ferry marked on the maps. This is, however, only available at certain stages of the tide, which must be carefully ascertained beforehand, and is never to be reckoned on with certainty, either on going or returning. The bridge at Bridgwater is the only really available road out of the Quantock country eastward.

There is nothing to take us to Steart therefore, except for the quaintness of the tiny isolated fishing village with its modern church. The whole place is redolent of its one industry, but no boats are to be seen. The nets are hung on stakes at the seaward edge of a mile or more of mud which is bare at low water, and are reached by means of very curious local sledges peculiar to the Parrett mouth, and sometimes called "mud-horses." They somewhat resemble a narrow inverted

table, the legs of which are strengthened with a framework. The table top is the sledge proper, and on the frame the net baskets are craftily piled, while the fisherman, in the most abbreviated of trousers, and bootless, rests his chest on the after crosspiece of the frame and propels the whole affair before him with remarkable swiftness across the mud, following definite "lanes" worn smooth by the reflux of the tide. Shrimps and flounders are the usual contents of the nets, with a notable addition in early summer of freshwater eels on their migration to the sea. A few salmon are taken in the Parrett itself, though not nearly so many as in years gone by, when Bridgwater indentures stipulated that the apprentices were not to be fed on salmon more than so many times a week!

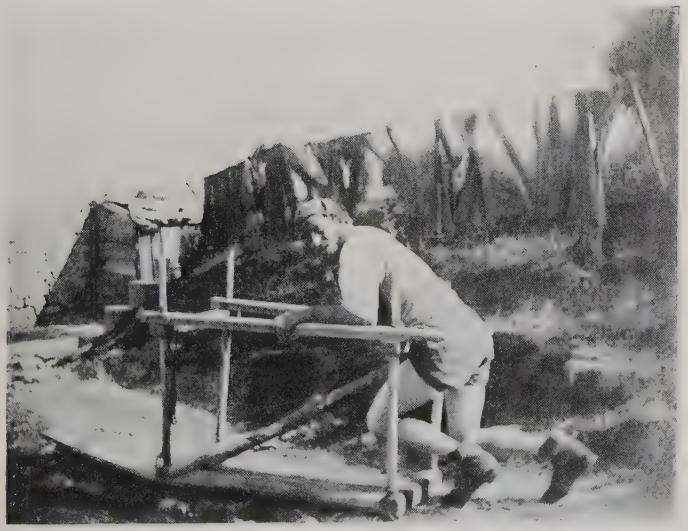
A few centreboard open boats, of a very curious local build, lie at Combwich, and are used for reaching nets set on the far side of the channel. The Bridgwater pilot cutters usually lie in the river under Steart Point.

Descending the very steep hill from Holford into Kilton, marked for cyclists with a danger board, we can visit the little church, dedicated, like so many sea-side churches, to St. Nicholas. It is small and has been rebuilt, and contains a very fine ancient octagonal font with figures carved at the base; on the chancel walls are some old memorial brasses with armorial bearings and inscriptions, which, like the font, came from the older building. In the tower stands an object, only known by report to later generations—one of those "barrel organs" which, early in the nineteenth century, were substituted for the "Nebuchadnezzar's band" of the generation earlier still.

An old dame whom I found sweeping out Kilton church remembered it in use: of course it limited the congregation to a small number of tunes, and this particular instrument played an interlude between the verses, which proved perplexing to strangers visiting the church, who usually continued singing the next verse of the hymn.

From Kilton, it is not far to Lilstock, a parish united with Kilton: but the church is only used as a

mortuary chapel. Here we can find our way through field paths to the sea shore. A stone wall and bastion guard the beach, where a tidal stream, scarcely to be called a river, runs into the sea. At the extreme end of the path stands a cottage in as lonely and wild a situation as can well be conceived, with nothing in sight but the low cliffs curving round the beach, and the sea, which at low tide seems to fall a long way out as if it



Photograph] [*Mr. Page*

THE MUD HORSE AT STEART.

wished to leave the spot altogether. But it is a pretty place under the sunshine, and, as tea can be had at the cottage, makes a favourite picnic resort.

When returning we can leave Kilton church, visible in the distance behind us, and make our way up a steep hill, turn to the left, and find our way as far as Burton, a hamlet where the blacksmith's forge forms a universal

landmark; for if you ask a way in this locality you are usually directed to go by Burton Smithy. Here the road forks, and that to the right will bring us to a sign post, when we shall soon find ourselves upon the road already traversed, that passes Fairfield, and leads direct to Nether Stowey.

This distance covered by the expedition thus described would be altogether about fourteen miles: to add Stolford, which we have only glanced at from the distance, would make it nearly twenty, and then it would be best to return through Stoke Courcy.

Most people will, however, visit Dodington by itself; it is three miles from Nether Stowey, and a pleasant afternoon could be spent seeing the Hall, rambling on the hills, and having tea at Castle of Comfort before returning home.

Photograph] [*Frith and Co.*

WATERFALL ON THE BEACH AT ST. AUDRIES

Photographed in the Summer of 1903.

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CHAPTER VIII.

BY THE SEVERN SEA.

Kilve. East Quantoxhead. St. Audries.

IT is four miles from Nether Stowey to Kilve, which lies just beyond Holford on the Minehead road. The lane turning to the church and Kilve Chantry being on the right, close to the post-office and the Hood Arms Hotel, where the most comfortable accommodation of every kind may be obtained.

About half-a-mile down hill is the church, a little white building with a short square tower. The key is kept at a cottage on the left hand side of the road as we go towards it. The remains of the stoup may be seen in the porch, the font is a circular Norman one, very simple in design. The tower has been screened off as a vestry, and the carvings so used look as if they were parts of the ancient screen, just as the window curiously placed above the pulpit suggests having formerly been in a rood stair turret. There is a good piscina in the chancel, and the Royal arms bearing the initials C. R., and the date 1660, show that they were loyally set up after the Restoration.

Beyond the church, near a farm house are the ruins of Kilve Chantry, the greater part of which was in a habitable condition until the middle of the last century. The history of this monastic establishment is somewhat obscure. It was founded in 1329 by Sir Simon de Furneaux, as a chantry for five priests, but before the end of the century the chantry had been dissolved, and the endowment appropriated to the rectory.

It has been conjectured that this was the act of Sir Richard Stury, who married Alice, heiress of the Furneaux family. Sir Richard was a Lollard, and may have

found some plausible excuse for diverting the endowment of the chantry of which his wife was lay patroness —it was not until more than a century later that patrons ventured upon putting endowments in their own pockets.

Kilve in old times was a rare spot for smugglers. The pill (or pool) near the sea shore, the church tower, and the chantry, all served as places for concealing kegs of wine and spirits. It is said that the destruction of the chantry buildings by fire in 1850 was aggravated by these spirits igniting.

The old walls festooned with ivy stand close by a new farmhouse: opposite are ponds, doubtless remains of the old monks' fish pools; from them the stream runs down to the sea, whither we may follow it through a path that takes us along two or three fields, and comes out by the pill near a ruined lime-kiln once a useful receptacle for smuggled silks and tobacco.

"Kilve's delightful shore" was one of the few places in the Quantocks which Wordsworth condescended to recall by name; though a later writer, Sir Walter Besant, could exclaim "let us say as little as need be of the sea shore at Kilve." But there is something quaintly attractive in these low broken cliffs, in the lines of brown rocks covered with dark weeds, and marked at frequent intervals by tall stakes to show where the treacherous shallows lie when it is high water.

And how pretty Kilve looks when one glances back at it from the top of the tiny headland. The white church nestles against the green trees, the jagged ruins of the chantry rise close by it, and the long line of hills makes a background for all.

The beach is formed of blue lias clay, and fossils abound among the stones, especially ammonites: these are sometimes called St. Keyna's serpents, tradition asserting that St. Keyna (who gave her name to Keynsham, near Bristol), when she came to Somerset, turned all the reptiles into stones. The wild open beach, however, is not always lonely, for at rare intervals it is the scene of a sport which is peculiar to the seaward end of the Quantocks, namely, conger-eel hunting with dogs. It sounds almost impossible, but

though the very mention of a "good fish dog" always raises an incredulous grin on the face of a stranger, the low spring tides of early autumn are looked forward to with eagerness by those of the neighbourhood who are the happy possessors of terrier or spaniel which is "entered" to the strange sport.

At certain stages of tide, given a wind which does not prevent the outward flow to any great extent, the flat rocks, bedded in mud which forms the foreshore, are exposed for some fifty or more yards beyond the usual extreme low water mark, leaving the unwary conger or,

Photograph] [*Bert Hole*

A MEET AT ST. AUDRIES.

"glatt" as the creature is locally called here, open to attack for an hour or so. Then, in clothes not of the best, and armed with six-foot ash saplings, chiselpointed at the end, the men and boys lift the great flat stones by force of leverage, and the eager dogs nose and scrape beneath them in wild excitement when their trained scent tells them that the "glatt" is at home in hiding. What with the persuasion of far-reaching paws, and the end of the ash pole, the eel found by the dog is brought to light, and becomes the immediate centre of turmoil. The dogs bark and snap at the slippery game, the boys shout, and the mud flies as the long sticks thresh the

place where it last was, until either the sharp teeth get a firm hold, or some well directed blow finds its mark. While it lasts the fun is amazing, and sometimes a twenty pound "glatt" finds a place among the more certain smaller two to five pound captures. At all events such a day is never blank, and it has the advantages of sea air and sunshine, with the long blue line of the Quantocks as a background to grey cliffs and purple strand, and, across the bay, Watchet, the Exmoor heights and Minehead, to complete a view which is worth seeing, even if the conger itself does not give an excuse for the somewhat muddy walk to the sea's edge. A late visitor to the district might do well to ask his hosts if there is any chance of a conger hunt during his stay.

It is possible to walk all along the cliff until, in about a mile, one reaches East Quantoxhead, the path at last winding among woods and emerging at the end of the village where there is a pond, and the church standing just above on a little eminence, with the massive fortress-like mansion of the Luttrells close against it, as if the two combined to defend this lovely place against all enemies, spiritual and temporal.

For this is indisputably the prettiest of all Quantock villages: a gem of rural beauty, thatched cottages, gay gardens, and a rippling stream gathered into a narrow cleft that runs seawards. Every house is a study of rustic picturesqueness, especially those in the higher part of the village where the stream passes the cottages and each door has its own bridge.

The church is reached through a farmyard: the manor gardens lying on the right hand with tangles of beautiful roses overhanging the walls. Few places are more suggestive of the olden time: for church, mansion, farm and garden must have been thus grouped together in the olden days when the Luttrell ancestors fought in the Wars of the Roses, since here we have one of those grand examples of an ancient house yet in the possession of its original owners, who have held it since the Conquest, and retained it through all the vicissitudes of history.

In the churchyard is the cross shaft, just opposite the south porch; and we must pause a moment to look at the beautiful view of the hills just opposite. We look up a long cleft where a rolling combe comes downwards, the hill sides seeming as if they poured into it on their way to the sea, the undulating lines soft and tender as they withdraw into the dim distance.

The church is very interesting, and has been carefully restored. It is very small, only a nave and chancel, divided by a good screen. The carved bench ends are some of them restorations: on one may be seen the arms of the Luttrells, "a bend between three martlets:" another has a curious device of the Tudor rose, a crown held above it by two monsters, and beneath some initials, a centaur and a unicorn.

The pulpit is richly carved in Jacobean style, with the date 1633. Near the piscina is a curious triangular niche in the south wall of the chancel. The north side is occupied by the tomb of Hugh Luttrell, having a fifteenth century panelled arch, and on the front three coats of arms: the first are those of Luttrell, the second impaled with a shield that shews two sceptres in saltire between four quatrefoils, the third is Luttrell again impaled with a chevron between three lions' heads erased, these last being the arms of Wyndham, of Orchard Wyndham, near Williton. On the tomb is an inscription, difficult to decipher, which reads as follows:

"Here luyt
Hugh Luttrell Knight
wyhe departed 1522 the fyrst day of February:
here lyt
Andro Luttrell Knight hys son
wyhe departed the yere of our Lord God MCCCCCXXXVIII
the III day of May
on whoys souly IHU have mcy."

The soft marble of the tomb has been shamefully scratched and cut with initials, and seems to have suffered in this way for at least two centuries, one date being 1700.

Ascending the lane through the village, we shall presently reach the Minehead road close to a pleasant

house that offers accommodation and refreshments as a "Cyclists' Rest." Nearly opposite to this the stream brawls down from that same combe which we noted from the churchyard: a gate seems to invite us to enter and ramble up the path by the water side. In the maps it is marked as "Smith's Combe," locally it is known by the more picturesque name of Danes Combe, and connected with some of the many battles with the Danes tradition ascribes to this locality. The pathway up the combe will, in time, bring us to Fire Beacon, or Flagstaff Hill, the highest point of the range at this end, and the only one with a flagstaff remaining to mark it. We shall note the mounds of more than one tumulus as we cross the heathery moorland, keeping slightly to the right after turning our backs upon the flagstaff. Holford beeches peeping over the hillside presently make a landmark, and tea on Miss Sellick's pleasant lawn at Alfoxton Cottage, already mentioned, will be welcome indeed after such a walk from sea-shore to mountain height, for Fire Beacon Hill has an elevation of 1000 feet.

On the hill just below Alfoxton Cottage there is another house, which would be passed if the walk downhill was taken to the Hood Arms. I mention it to note the quaint sundial it bears, which has upon it an owl and a cock, and the Greek motto—

"ΕΡΧΕΤΑΙ ΝΥΞ" (Night cometh).

A cyclist might make a delightful ramble of these places by leaving the bicycle at the Hood Arms and exploring the sea-shore and hill on foot; returning down Pardlestone Lane which descends into the high road exactly opposite the hotel, the cycle serving to save time and fatigue over the bit of high road between Kilve and Nether Stowey, if a return to the latter is intended. The independent pedestrian will find that the prettiest walk back is by Holford beeches, and the whole distance would be about 15 miles.

West Quantoxhead is better known as St. Audries, from the name of the pretty little church of St. Etheldreda built by the late Sir Peregrine Acland Hood in 1856. This is about eight miles from Nether Stowey at

Photograph]

THE PARK AND CHURCH AT ST. AUDRIES

[*Frith and Co.*

the extreme end of the Quantocks. After passing East Quantoxhead the road becomes shady and somewhat undulating, and after a sharp decline the scene suddenly opens upon a full view of the beautiful woods that crown the headland and descend to the sea-shore, with St. Audries Church lying in green hollow close to the way-side. Even after familiarity has taught one what to expect, the view never loses its first impression of wonderful beauty, though presently one realizes that the secret of its indescribable loveliness lies in the unusual combination of woodland and moorland in sight of the sea, with that additional touch of homeliness and stateliness given by the village church and the mansion of Sir Alexander Acland Hood.

The only ancient relic near the church is the fragment of the cross: the building, though small, is celebrated for the richness of its decoration, being largely built with polished Devonshire marbles, and no detail spared which would add to its beauty.

The Manor House was built by the late Sir Alexander Acland Hood, who, while enlarging and beautifying the original Tudor mansion, incorporated many parts of the older building in the new one. The house, completed with the utmost taste within and without, contains many treasures, and also most interesting collections connected with the local archæology of the Quantocks. It is not, however, a show place, though visitors are sometimes privileged to be admitted upon special permission. The grounds, with their quain shell and rock grottoes, and the charming beach with its cascade, are favourite pic-nic resorts. The modern rectory, overlooking the church, has already its interest as the home for many years of the late Rev. J. R. Vernon, writer of many well-known books, of which the *Harvest of a Quiet Eye* is perhaps that which will be best remembered.

Just opposite St. Audries Church a turning will be observed with a signpost for Bicknoller.

The time has come for us to quit our pleasant centre at Nether Stowey and change quarters, so as more conveniently to explore the western side of the hills.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE HILLS.

Bicknoller. Crowcombe. Stogumber.

DIRECTLY we betake ourselves to the western side of the hills, we notice how much more steeply they rise from the valley below.

Our road towards Bicknoller instead of winding at the foot of gentle slopes becomes a terrace on the hill-side which falls sharply below, and rises abruptly overhead.

And when in the shady lanes we get glimpses of the Brendon hills still farther west, and find the woody Quantocks rising close at hand, we seem shut into the very heart of the hills.

A deep glen cleaves the mountain as we pass on our way; this is Weacombe, through which we might ascend Fire Beacon hill on its western side. More than one writer has spoken in praise of Weacombe, and Mr. Page, referring to its autumn tints, observes, "in the hundreds of miles of moorland tramped I do not know that I have seen any of nature's colouring so vivid as that upon this hill-side." Weacombe possesses a tiny lake in the grounds close by the house; this is of course private, but the water gleams prettily among the trees, adding to the beauty of the view as one ascends the hill.

Bicknoller lies directly under the bald brow of Trendle Ring, a steep down whose bare slopes are particularly conspicuous in this land of wood and heather. But Trendle Ring should be seen in late summer or autumn, when the heath blooms upon it in broad purple patches, and darkens all the hill-side; then it is really wonderful in its richness of tint under the sunlight.

The church is interesting: a battlement pierced with

Photograph] **ST. AUDRIES' HOUSE.** [*Frith and Co.*

The seat of Sir Alexander Acland Hood, Bart., M.P.

quatrefoils runs along the north and south sides: the tower appears to have been decorated with figures of angels at its summit; and the south porch shews the remains of image niches on its parvise. As usual we find good carving on the bench ends and in addition the screen remains across the chancel: no doubt it extended to the north side, as here appear the rood loft doorways. Close inspection shews the remains of colour on the carving: the fan groinings are particularly beautiful. In the chancel is the piscina, and an ogee arch at each side denotes the existence of altar tombs. On the north side of the chancel the "squint" has been cut through a pillar. The shaft of the cross stands in the churchyard.

Quitting Bicknoller we find ourselves upon the high road between Williton and Taunton. This runs through Crowcombe, and on the way we must glance at Halsway when passing by. It stands on the left side of the road, a large white house surrounded by park-like slopes of wooded hills. The present building, though possessing some ancient features, is of no special interest; but Halsway has a famous reputation, having been the "hunting box" of the great Cardinal Beaufort, guardian of Henry VI, Regent during his minority, Bishop of Winchester, and Lord of the Manor of Taunton Deane. The fact of the Cardinal building himself a special residence for hunting here shews how long a record the Quantock hills can boast of sporting fame. One generation after another passes, but they still preserve the spirit of the "greenwood gay,"

> "When the deer sweeps by, the hounds in cry,
> And the hunter's horn is ringing."

Crowcombe, though a large village, affords little accommodation for those who would like to make a stay in this part of the district. It is a pity, for it would make a pleasant centre for walks and excursions, standing as it does on the side of the hill, two miles from the station at Crowcombe Heathfield, and almost the same distance from Stogumber.

A slender cross rises in the centre of the village, adding to its old-world air of picturesque quiet. Just a little

farther on, the ancient half-ruined church house, the gates of Crowcombe Court, and the church itself form three sides of a triangle.

A second cross stands in the churchyard, opposite the south door. It is a particularly fine type of the canopied cross, the shaft having niches at the sides, still holding figures, though these are much weather worn. On the west side is a Bishop, two others seem to be St. John the Baptist, and a female figure, possibly the Madonna. The south porch has a fan roof, and the battlements of the south wall are decorated with quatrefoils and shields: on one of these may be observed the emblems of the Five Wounds.

Collinson considers the bench ends to be some of the most ancient carved seats in England, one of them bears the date 1534, carved thus,

Anno Dni Mº CCCCC XXX IIII

Upon one of them is the quaint device of two men fighting a two-headed dragon (*see* page 87).

On the north side of the church the chapel belongs to the Carews of Crowcombe Court, the walls covered with mural tablets and hatchments, on which may be observed the "three lions passant sable" of the Carews with other arms of family alliances.

The octagonal font is very richly carved, the panels shewing—

1. Christ enthroned, raising His hands in benediction.
2. A knight kneeling in prayer.
3. A Bishop giving a blessing.
4. A King enthroned with cross and sword.
5. A Bishop holding a crozier, and what seems intended for the model of a church.
6. St. Anne teaching Our Lady to read.
7. A monk in prayer, near him an angel with a scroll.
8. A lady kneeling in prayer: she corresponds with the knight (2): both kneel towards the Christ.

Some fragments of ancient glass are preserved in the windows of the south side; here, and also in the chancel, are piscinas. The modern reredos is a beautiful piece

Photograph] [*H. Montague Cooper*

A QUANTOCK CHURCH, CROWCOMBE.

of sculpture and mosaic, erected in memory of a member of the Carew family.

Unfortunately the ancient Church House is fast falling into ruin. It was founded in pre-reformation times as a charitable institution, and continued to be used as a combined school and almshouse till recently. This mediaeval and picturesque building has unfortunately been allowed to become ruinous, it now looks as if it would be unsafe to tread the upper floors, which are approached by a flight of steps from the road.

The late Richard Jefferies wrote of this old building :*

"Underneath the ancient folk lived as best they might, while the young folk learned and gave their class responses, or romped on the floor overhead. The upper part of the building belonged to one owner, the lower part to another landlord. It came about that the roof decayed, and the upper owner suggested to the lower owner that they should agree in bearing the cost of repairs. Upon which, the owner of the basement remarked that he contemplated *pulling his part down*."

Wills Neck is about two miles from Crowcombe, and may be reached by proceeding along the high road until a sign-post for Taunton and Stowey is reached. This fork of the road is locally known as Red Post, though the post is painted white! The Stowey road is a rather rough lane by which we presently arrive at a hamlet of a few cottages and an Inn, "Blue Ball." Thence straight up hill, and a very steep rough hill it is, will bring us to Triscombe Stone, and the path to Wills Neck already described.

But as we have already seen Wills Neck, let us make our way downhill to Stogumber. The road will lead us to the station, and on the way we shall pass Heddon Oak. There is no mistaking this large tree, it is marked on the maps, and stands conspicuous on the right hand side of the road with a turning and sign-post opposite. On its handy branches some of Monmouth's rebels were hung; as we look at the tree, we may imagine that it was the half-dead bough which leans over the road that

* "Summer in Somerset." Last Essays. 1895 Ed.

bore these dismal acorns, and has never flourished since. Of course the spot is haunted, though some cottages nearly in sight of the tree, and a farm just below, detract somewhat from the loneliness of the place; but solitude is not a characteristic of the Quantock hills, and even the shadow of Judge Jeffreys cannot cast a gloom over them.

Like a good many other places we have visited, Stogumber, though it lies away from the Quantock hills, is inseparably connected by association with the district. The name is a corruption of Stoke de Gomer, another Saxon Stoke attached to the Norman name of the Lord of the Manor. Of the family of De Gomer nothing seems remaining except this name. The church is very fine, and admirably restored. The north aisle was built by Cardinal Beaufort, and is known as the Halsway aisle. Here the double hagioscope, pierced through the arches of the piers, is very remarkable, and only occurs in two other churches in England.

In this aisle, under a window is a brass of 1585 to Elizabeth Wyndham. On the opposite side stands a large altar tomb of Sir George Sydenham, with his two wives; at their feet a kneeling figure, and three infants in swaddling clothes. Sir George Sydenham built the house of Combe Sydenham near Stogumber, in 1580: he died in 1596, and still haunts the place, riding down the combe every night between midnight and cock-crow. His daughter and heiress married Sir Francis Drake, to whom she was engaged before he started for one of his adventurous voyages. So long was he absent that she thought he must be dead and became engaged to another lover. Just as they were quitting Combe Sydenham for the church to be married, a cannon ball fell from the skies at her feet! "It is a message from Drake," cried she, and refused to go on with the ceremony. Only Sir Francis Drake could have employed such means to keep a lady faithful! It was successful too, for he returned and married Elizabeth Sydenham in Stogumber church, and the cannon ball (a meteorolite) is preserved at Combe Sydenham to this day.

Between Stogumber and Williton lies the little village

of Sampford Brett, which obtained its name from Richard le Bret, one of the murderers of St. Thomas à Becket. There is nothing of particular interest to see there, the church is small and only has its bench ends to recommend it, nor are these superior to many already looked at elsewhere. On one is the figure of a lady, supposed to represent that Lady Wyndham who was buried alive at St. Decuman's, whose story we shall learn when we go to Watchet. So let us betake ourselves thither through Williton without further delay.

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CHAPTER X.

WILLITON AND WATCHET, ST. DECUMAN'S, CLEEVE ABBEY.

ALTHOUGH we have left Williton to the end of our explorations it is very likely that those who visit the Quantocks will make the little town their first starting point. Being upon the Minehead branch of the Great Western Railway it is conveniently reached by rail from Taunton. There is another station at Watchet, a couple of miles farther on, and both towns have good accommodation for visitors: Watchet, indeed, regarding itself as a watering place, quiet enough it is true, and in this respect particularly to be recommended to those who want to enjoy the sea-side apart from the exigencies of fashion or the popular forms of amusement, many of which are better calculated to drive lovers of the sea inland, than to attract them to the shore. Williton has been described as a "large straggling village;" but surely a place with a workhouse, railway station, and newspaper office, must be regarded as a town, and Williton is a very pretty town too. It stands in the centre of four cross roads, the ways diverging from it for Taunton, Minehead, Watchet, and Bridgwater, and the artist or photographer will find the thatched houses, the stream that runs down some of the streets, and the many pretty corners in and out of this little town, full of the most tempting bits for pencil or camera.

The workhouse really demands attention: it lies between the station and the town and is such an imposing structure that one imagines the Union is anxious to impart an artistic sense to its paupers—or does the large

building uphold the dignity of the Williton Free Manors, by which title the county division is known. Williton, standing in the "Hundred of Williton Free Manors," as part of the land, anciently belonged to the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem; and, enjoying greater privileges than the rest of the manor, obtained the name of Williton Free Manors, still retained, though the Priory has long ceased to exist.

Williton and Watchet both belong to the parish of St. Decuman's; Williton church being a chapel of ease, though of ancient foundation. It was originally a chantry chapel built by Robert Fitzurse, brother of the Reginald Fitzurse who shared in the murder of Thomas à Becket. When closely examined the little church is a curious mixture of the old and new. At first sight it appears entirely modern, but over the south porch are fragments of a bracket cut with the I.H.S. The piscina and two image brackets remain in the chancel, and some of the mullions of the south windows are old.

The octagonal alabaster font bears the date 1666, and initials R.W., R.P., probably those of churchwardens. The shaft of the cross stands near the church. Another fragment, most likely of a market cross, may be observed at the corner close to the Egremont Hotel.

Turning out of Williton by the Minehead road (past the police station) and taking the next turning for Monksilver, we shall reach the hamlet by the stream in less than a mile-and-a-half. Asking the way at the farm here for "Mother Shipton's Tomb," we shall be allowed to go up the steep field into Blackdown wood, and as we ascend we see the house, Orchard Wyndham just below, while the view across the Severn Sea from the field is particularly pretty. Where the wire fence ends we may get into the wood, and a few paces under the trees, see what is described by the farmer as "a big tomb-stone." This is a pseudo-Roman monument to "Julia Martima" declared by antiquaries to be a forgery. On the top is the roughly cut bust and head of a lady, the lettering below is suspiciously clear, and at the bottom is a wreath very like the "garter." I fear the stone has no more to do with a Roman lady than with Mother Shipton.

Farther down in the same wood, close to a five barred gate, just above the farm, is a very pretty grotto, called the Giant's cave, a charming bit of rock work and arches among the trees.

At the northern side of Williton the road forks at a little inn called the Mason's Arms ; both ways go towards Watchet, but the road on the left, that ascends the hill, is the direct high road, and we will take this way, passing, just before ascending the hill, a field known as "Battle Gore." It is a rough bit of land, almost like a common, with some mounds upon it, and on the left side, close under the hedge, two large stones, a third is not far off, which are thought to be the remains of a cromlech. So overgrown are they, and so distant, that they need seeking for, and look, at first sight, like fallen trees, or a bit of old wall. Local legend asserts that they were hurled from the Quantocks by a giant and the Devil, who had a match which could throw farthest ; on the one that leans up against the hedge may be seen the the marks of Satan's hand. As one looks at these stones one feels that the legend seems scarcely more incredible than the archæologist's assertion, and anybody may believe the one just as well as the other.

Doubtless this hurling match was prehistoric : St. Decuman, whose church we reach at the top of the hill, is said to have lived A.D. 400.

Like most of the Somersetshire saints, he came across the Severn sea from South Wales, but disdaining the usual fashion of navigation, floated over on a hurdle accompanied by a faithful cow who never quitted him, and by whose milk he was sustained. Landing at Watchet, he built a hermitage on the hill above the town, and here he lived for many years. At last some heathen horde drove him from his cell to the beach, cut off his head, and left him dead and dishonoured by the sea. St. Decuman however arose, took his head and returned to his cell, washed his bleeding corpse in the fountain close by, and then laid him down to his last slumber. Presently some of his disciples found him, buried the body in his own chapel, and in after years a church was built on the place that covers his remains.

Photograph] [*Frith and Co.*

RUSTIC BRIDGE IN HOLFORD GLEN.

Another tale of the building is that common to nearly all west country churches that stand on hills, namely, that the original site was lower down, but the Devil took the stones uphill every night until human patience wore out, and the church was left where his satanic majesty wished it to be. Perhaps he felt that the hill would prove a hindrance to people attending Divine worship.

Such, at any rate, is the story of the church of St. Decuman, of which the fine lofty tower rises upon the hill west of Watchet.

Coleridge himself notes in *The Ancient Mariner*, "it was on a delightful walk from Nether Stowey to Dulverton with Mr. Wordsworth and his sister in the autumn of 1797 that this poem was planned and in part composed."

In the well-known lines—

> The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
> Merrily did we drop
> Below the kirk, below the hill,
> Below the lighthouse top;

The lighthouse is universally acknowledged to be that on Flat-holm, and the kirk said to be the church of Penarth, South Wales, visible on clear days from the Quantocks. But if, as seems suggested, the Ancient Mariner set off from Watchet, is it not more likely that the tower of St. Decuman's, his own Kirk tower, would be the one towards which his last look was given as he sailed away to lands unknown?

We like to feel that the Quantocks, not the Lake district, inspired Coleridge with his finest poem, and may we not also claim that St. Decuman's tower was the one in his thoughts when the lines were written? No doubt, too, he knew the local legends, and St. Decuman would suggest to his mind the "hermit in the wood" who when the church tower again came in sight, shrived the Ancient Mariner as he returned to his "ain countree."

Apart from any traditional associations St. Decuman's church is of great interest. Above the grave-yard, where the curious in epitaphs will find some quaint verses, rises the lofty cross completely restored. Outside

the west door the holy water stoup still remains, and in a niche on the south side is a figure doubtless intended for St. Decuman. Inside the south porch is another stoup, and a niche, both broken. The interior, of true Perpendicular west country architecture, is built without a chancel arch: nave and chancel being divided by the carved screen. The church shews nave, north and south aisles, chancel and chancel aisles, these last formed by cutting off the east end of the aisles with the screen. The roofs are decorated with fine carved bosses, those of the "Holy Cross aisle," on the south side, having the richest patterns. There are image niches on the pillars of the north aisle, one of them still retaining its figures, apparently of four bishops. On the pillar behind the pulpit are figures of St. George and the dragon, and also of an abbot. The pulpit is Jacobean with painted panels, these last being modern. On the north wall some old encaustic tiles are preserved, and the chancel still retains its old tiled flooring, prudently covered with carpet to preserve it from injury.

The font at the west end is new, the old Perpendicular font being in the south chapel; here also are some old helmets.

Undoubtedly the most interesting features of the church are the Wyndham monuments, especially the brasses. The Wyndhams became possessed of this Somersetshire property through John, second son of Sir Thomas Wyndham, of Norfolk; who married Elizabeth, sister and co-heir of Sir John Sydenham of Orchard, in the reign of Henry VIII, the manor house being henceforth known as Orchard Wyndham.

The end of the north aisle is the family pew decorated with wood-carving, and bearing the date 1688.

Round it are gathered the monuments: the oldest is to John Wyndham, and Elizabeth his wife, the brasses being let into the top of an altar tomb which has armorial bearings carved round the base. The inscriptions, long verses, being cut into the brass below the figures; the lady died in 1571, her husband 1574. Below the east window of the aisle are the brasses of John Wyndham and Florence his wife (1572—1596) with the

arms of Wyndham and Wadham, to which latter family the lady belonged. She was the Lady Wyndham of whom the story is told that being as her relations thought dead, she was buried in St. Decuman's church, and the sexton coming at night to steal her rings, to his dismay found her ready to sit up as soon as he opened the coffin. She returned home, and her son John Wyndham, whose monument was close by, was born after this adventure. A more charitable version of the tale relates that the sexton heard her cry, and rescued her.

The monument to John Wyndham and Joan Portman his wife (1633—1645) had brasses embossed and gilded, a later, and not so good a type of these sepulchral monuments.

The brass of Edmund Wyndham, 1616, is in the chancel: he was governor of Bridgwater, and father of the loyal Sir Hugh Wyndham who was one of the six hostages demanded by Fairfax when that town was surrendered.

A slab, discovered in restoring the church in 1886, bears the inscription—

> "Here lies beneath this ragged stone
> One more his princes than his own,
> And in his martyred father's wars
> Lost fortune, blood, gained nought but scars.
> And for his sufferings as reward
> Had neither countinace or regard
> And earth affording no releif
> Has gone to Heaven to ease his grief."

Yet royal neglect could not shake the loyalty of the Wyndhams, for the inscription on the monument of William Wyndham, who died in 1683, tell us that he "devoted himself to the crown and to the closing of the breach made by the late unhappy divisions."

The last of this notable series of family tombs is another large altar tomb with a slab of blue marble where rests George Wyndham, Lord Egremont, who died in 1845. The title is now extinct.

An excellent account, full of detail, of St. Decuman's church and parish, may be had at the office of the *West Somerset Free Press* in Williton, price 6d.

The well, that very fountain where St. Decuman washed himself after his martyrdom, is in a field on the north-west side of the church: it is still regarded as a sacred well by the parishioners, and until recently the water for the christenings was always brought from St. Decuman's well.

From the church we can descend the hill into Watchet, a quaint little town by the sea, full of old-fashioned corners, and by-ways that run to the shore. Watchet's part in history was played in the tenth century when the Saxon chronicle for the year 988 mournfully records, "this year was Watchet ravaged, and Gode the Devonshire thane slain, and with him much slaughter made." It has been suggested that the reason for these frequent attacks on Watchet may have arisen because one of the royal mints was established there. On the west side of the town, up the hill, stands a lime-kiln known as Dawes Castle, said to be on the site of the battle, or one of the battles between the men of Watchet and the Danes: human remains have been found there, but no weapons.

Watchet has found a place in Literature through Chatterton's "Rowley" ballads of "Ælle atte Watchet"; Ælle being traditionally a governor of Bristol who here defeated the Danes. These poems are the finest work of that "marvellous boy" who conterfeited ancient tradition so ingeniously.

From Dawes Castle one overlooks the whole of the little town with its pier and lighthouse. The pier was first built in the time of Queen Elizabeth: at present it is almost completely ruined, having been totally destroyed in a gale more than a year ago; and it is thought that at least another twelve months must pass before it is repaired, though the work goes on busily. Watchet looks its best at high tide, the sea receding a long way when the water ebbs. So far does it go, that in the Civil war a vessel was taken off Watchet by a troop of horse: she was coming from Wales with supplies for the King, when Captain Popham of the Parliamentary forces, seeing how shallow the water was, called his men to ride into the sea and take her. After this who shall say that there never were "Horse Marines?"

Photograph] THE HOLFORD BEECHES. [*Frith and Co.*

(*See page* 31).

On the eastern side, the cliff is interesting to the geologist, for the strata have been raised by some "fault" until the layers of blue clay and red with which the rock is composed are almost standing on end. Fossils from the lias clay are easily picked up on the beach.

Having found our way to the eastern side of the town, we may as well return to Williton over the railway bridge, instead of going up the steep hill to St. Decuman's. The cyclist will prefer this road, as it is nearly level: it takes us by the hamlet of Doniford, where the stump of a wayside cross stands at the fork of the road; we must go to the right for Williton, the other way leads up a steep hill to St. Audries.

We have learnt that there is a communication all the way along the hills from Bridgwater to Kilve, but there is no regular conveyance from Kilve to Williton: it is necessary to make this last bit of the circle either on foot, or by hiring a vehicle, or with the ever handy bicycle.

The ruins of the Cistercian Monastery, Cleeve Abbey, are just two miles from Williton, and are easily reached by following the Minehead road to Washford, where, just beyond the Post-office, the Abbey Gate House can be seen among the orchard trees in the valley on the left hand.

The Abbey, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, was founded in 1188, and some of the earliest and latest work in the building is combined in the Gate House, where the figure of the Madonna and Child still smiles welcome from the niche as we enter, and inside in another niche is the Crucifix above the name of Abbot Dovell, who in the sixteenth century made some additions to this Gate House and other parts of the building.

Crossing the meadow we reach the Abbey itself: a charge of one shilling admission is made for one person, or sixpence each for parties of two or more.

It may be noted in exploring these ruins that while the universal plan of a Cistercian foundation has been followed, so far as the earliest plan is concerned, the whole arrangement has been reversed, precisely as if the traced ground plan had been copied from the back, or in

a mirror. Possibly this note may save puzzlement to those who know such typical piles as Furness Abbey, raised by the Cistercian brethren.

We are now standing in the Cloister garth, with the broken arches of the cloister on the left, the monks' dormitory opposite, and the steps to the refectory on the right hand. To this, though it is the latest part of the building, one first turns. The room, which stands over an Early English lower story, is Perpendicular throughout, having a fine vaulted roof, with richly carved bosses, and figures of angels round it. The floor at the end of the room is formed of tiles collected from various parts of the building. Above this, on the east wall, a fresco of the Crucifixion with our Lady and St. John at each side of the Cross, has been preserved. The figures are dim, but as one looks. the face of the Christ, gentle and pathetic, seems to grow more and more distinct, bearing a dignity and pathos neither time nor neglect have been able to mar.

Below the refectory a series of small chambers open one into another, from which we find our way into the monks' day room, believed to have been the old refectory. It is a large room, with two beautiful lancet windows at the end. A narrow passage passes between this and the library, where we must note the four recesses, or aumbries, where the monks left their books or work as they passed out.

Another flight of stairs leads to the monks' dormitory which originally extended right over this side of the building, and above the living room. The long "skew" opening in the furthest corner was the door from which perpetual watch was kept over the lights in the church.

Leaving the cloister garth through a broken arch, we find ourselves on the site of the church, where only hollows and stones shew traces of pillars and aisles. But here, on the right, we go into the sacristry, with its ruined rose window, barrel roof, aumbries, and a piscina with painted traceries yet shewing in the back of the recess, now closed with a glass door for its better preservation.

I have only given these very brief notes on Cleeve

THE GATEHOUSE, CLEEVE ABBEY

Abbey, as a careful and detailed account of the ruin has already been published in another volume of the Homeland Hand-books.*

But at Cleeve the Quantocks look far away, and we feel the time has come to bid farewell to their wooded combes. Long may it be before the stream of fashion flows in their direction, or the builder clears aside those waving trees to make room for "villa residences."

There is little fear of this: the Quantock landowners, and the Quantock sportsman will guard the wilds that shelter the red deer from all less noble intruders.

He who enjoys the charm of the country, and finds pleasure in stories of ancient days, or would seek the shrines of literature and try and catch the poet's mood among the scenes where his work was done, to such a one speaks the Spirit of the Quantocks:

> "The moment that his face I see
> I know the man who must hear me:
> To him my tale I teach."

* "Minehead, Porlock and Dunster." No. 18 of the Homeland Handbooks.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE FOLK OF THE QUANTOCKS.

The Dialect. Saints and Dragons. Battle traditions. The Camp of Refuge. Old Heathen Legends. The Pixies. Witchcraft.

CONTRIBUTED BY REV. C. W. WHISTLER.

THE Quantock district, with naturally strong boundaries of river and fen, hill and sea, marking it off sharply from the rest of Somerset, has characteristics of its own which render it more than usually interesting to a student of race, dialect and tradition. Kenwalch of Wessex was the first who set the Saxon border on the Parrett, driving the Britons, after a heavy slaughter at Pen-Selwood, across its fens to Petherton, so late as A.D. 658; and Kentwine his successor crossed the river in 682 and drove the Britons to the sea, probably ridding his men of Somerset of troublesome raiders from the Quantock forests, so soon as their secret of the fen paths had been learned: but it remained for Ina to incorporate the Quantock "quadrilateral" definitely in the lands of the Sumorsætas, after his decisive victory over Gerent of Cornwall in 708, and subsequent building of Taunton as the fortress which should safeguard his acquisition. From his time,—though for the next century the newly annexed lands from the Parrett westward to the present Devon boundary seem to have been known as "Devon in Wessex" as opposed to Devon proper, which remained in the hands of its native princes until perhaps the time of Ecgbert—the Quantocks have been well within the Somerset boundary.

But the folk have never been entirely Saxon. Ina, the conqueror, had advanced beyond the old heathen plan of

slavery or extermination of the older race, and under his new laws Saxon and West-Welshman settled down in perfect amity. To-day the types of both races exist, well marked, and names of Cornish derivation occur, in the villages within sight of Dowsboro'.

As may be supposed, the dialect consequently is of the Devon type, the difference between that spoken on the eastern and western sides of the Parrett being well defined. Whether an untrained ear can appreciate it, may be doubtful, but it is well known among us that a man from Stogursey declined remunerative work on the Polden hills, because, "I do zim dat dey do talky zo terr'ble broad down over dere, dat I caent hraightly zinse what dey do zay!" And in this dialect, not so hard to "zinse" after all, as it is slow and soft, one who knows how to win the confidence of the folk will hear some lore which belongs to both races. It is not forgotten yet, though it is more in the background than in years gone by, and one may even hope that an interest in the old traditions is waking again before it is too late.

Some legends of the old British saints of days before the coming of the Saxons have already been mentioned in their places, and more might remain to be told: but probably the dragon legends claim first place in the affections of the folk. Both saint and dragon are however commemorated in the story of Carhampton marsh, which lies at the hill foot between Watchet and Cleeve. There King Arthur, who was hunting a certain most evil dragon, met good St. Carantoc, who had set a round table, which an angel had given him, afloat on the upper waters of the Severn, and was looking for the place of its landing. The table had come ashore here, and it would seem that the king had heard of it, for when he asked the saint if he had seen any dragon, he was asked in return if he had seen the table, and eventually an exchange was arranged. Arthur shewed Carantoc the table as it lay on the shore, and the saint called the dragon from the sea. And thereon the famous round table was borne away by the king, while the saint, throwing his stole round the neck of the submissive reptile, went his way with it as companion.

Another dragon lived in Shervage wood, that beautiful cover at the back of the "Castle of Comfort" on the Stowey road between Nether Stowey and Holford, and thence devastated the neighbourhood after the manner of those beasts. But it needed no saint to lead it away. A poor woodman who must get his living, dragon or no dragon, ventured into the wood during the apparent absence of the enemy, and at dinner-time sat on its slumbering length, taking it for a fallen tree among the fern. Whereon it heaved itself.

"Eh!" he said, leaping up. "Her do be you, does her? Thee do movey, do 'ee? Well den!" With that he struck his axe with all his might into his uncanny seat, and fled. The dragon was never seen afterward, but the children tell of it with bated breath as they gather the "worts" in the place which it haunted.

FIGHTING A DRAGON.

Bench end in Crowcombe Church.

There are dragon legends again at Crowcombe, less definite, but commemorated on a bench end in the Church there, as elsewhere in the Taunton valley below. It is quite possible that these legends have grown up from the songs of the gleemen who sang of the ancient struggle between the dragon standards of Wessex and West Wales in the days of Kentwine and Ina, when the dragon-filled prophecies of Merlin seemed to be coming to pass in their very midst.

Those battles are not forgotton. At Plainsfield, close to the entrance of Aisholt combe, below the great camp of Dowsboro' and a smaller, unnamed, fort among the woods to the south of Cocker Combe, they will tell you was fought the most terrible battle that ever was in these parts, "when the dead were heaped all so high as the top of the gates, and the blood did hurn (run) out so deep as to the second bar." The field is still known, and the mounds which hid the slain have not long disappeared under the plough. Probably it would be some battle which Kentwine won, while the gates whose defence must be commemorated were those of his stockaded fort, round which the British swarmed in desperation from their hillforts in vain.

Dowsboro' camp has of course its own legends. It is of ancient British work, and was the refuge camp of the district. Danesboro', the name by which it is often known, comes either from the old Welsh "dinas," or from the beacon, the "Dawn," whose place is just inside the entrance from the steep ascent from Castle of Comfort. It is highly improbable that the Danes ever climbed the hill. One tradition, however, records the utter massacre of "Danes" there, only one boy being spared—which boy by the way is still commemorated in Wordsworth's unfinished poem named after him, and doubtless written here. This legend is probably misplaced nowadays from the undoubted site of a massacre at the hill-fort near Combwich, now called Cannington park, which was almost certainly that of Hubba and his Danes. An untold number of skeletons still lie there to prove the tale true.

The Danes are unforgotten in the Quantock land, and round their name all ancient traditions tend to cluster, even the Monmouth Rebellion, which is hardly separable in the mind of the villagers now from the skirmishes of the Cavaliers and Roundheads, being referred to "those times when they did fight" indefinitely, and so inevitably to the days of the utmost terror, the coming of the Danes.

One later terror has left his mark in Dowsborough tradition however, and that is Buonaparte himself.

When day by day his arrival with his armies was expected, the shores of the Bristol channel were always felt to be open to a landing, and on the Quantockside every waggon and team was told off and numbered, and each waggoner knew exactly which families he had to take, with their belongings, to the ancient hill-top refuge on the first warning of danger, the original use of the camp being thus realized once more. One of those old waggons, such a one as Morland would have loved to draw, still exists, unused and decaying, under a farmyard tree near Stockland. The old man whose father was to have driven it with its refugees only died a year ago.

One who will dare to sit at night on the ramparts of Dowsboro' may still hear the voices of ancient warriors singing at their feasts within the hill, and over the summit rides the wild hunt of Woden on stormy nights, a terror to be heard. Half way down to the Castle of Comfort, in Shervage Wood is a peaty pool which never dries, and is in some dim way connected with "Wayland Smith" whose name it bears.

From Dowsboro' to the other hill-fort at Cannington park an ancient track, which is still to be traced, led directly, crossing the main road from Stowey to Bridgwater at the forge where the Fiddington lane branches off to the left. This Keenthorne corner has a weird reputation of its own, and at the smithy itself the blacksmith of some long ago period shod the black steed of the wild huntsman himself. The smith had incautiously boasted that he would dare shoe the horse of the devil himself, if so be he came to the forge, and of course the invitation was accepted at midnight. How the smith saved himself from taking pay for the job, which was carried out "to rights" in spite of his terror, by the help of the Fiddington parson of the period, needs telling on the spot. The legend is no doubt one of the "Wayland Smith" remainders. Any carter of to-day will tell you that no horse will pass that corner quietly because of the witches who used to live there, also. One of them at least, had the power of sending her enquirers home over the tree-tops, though exactly how none could remember after the ride.

Older legends than those of witches cluster thickly round the fort near Combwich at the end of this ancient track. There the wild hunt has been constantly seen, and none will willingly cross the path that leads along under the old stone-piled walls after dark. Once a belated passer saw the great black hounds with fiery tongues, followed by a terrible rider who rode a headless horse, and another man met the headless rider himself passing noiselessly down the lane. But for one man it was reserved to speak with the huntsman, who stayed his wild career overhead to ask how his steed ambled. The steed was a vast pig, and the terrified man named the Holy Name as he answered that "her ambles well enow." Whereon the pig and its rider vanished in a "vlash of vire."

These legends are Odinic, and cannot have been brought here by Ina's Christian warriors. It is Thor who rides the headless horse, and the hooded Odin who rides with covered face is the second huntsman. Frey, on his golden boar "Gullinbursti" completes the trio of old gods, whose comrade Wayland was. There must have been in pre-christian days a forgotten settlement of northern people here among the West Welsh, and most probably it was of Danish or Norse origin, made at the same time as the Pembroke, Swansea, and Gower settlements were strong on the opposite coast. The name of Watchet, the port of the Quantocks, may be Norse or Danish, and the flaxen hair and blue eyes of many of the coast families seem to bear out this probability.

Not far from Stolford is a large tumulus too, to which a legend of entirely northern origin is attached. It tells how a ploughman mended the little broken "peel" or baker's bread shovel, which he found lying on the side of the mound, and was afterward rewarded by finding in the place where he had left it a wonderful cake, hot from the oven of the little folk. Many northern mounds have the same tale told of them.

This mound is said to be rebuilt at night if ever it is removed, and it is well-known as a haunt of the Pixies even yet. In a barn not far off the last of them were seen within memory. The owner heard sounds of

threshing, and looked cautiously over the half-door in order to identify the trespasser. There were swarms of red-capped pixies at work on his corn, and so delighted was he with their industry that he cried "well done then, my little fellows." But the unluckly shout scared them, and they have never been visible since.

Visible or not, the fear of being "pixy-led" is still strong among the Quantock villages, and quite recent examples are well known, if little spoken of. The bent end of the brambles which take root firmly to form a loop across the hedge sides are their work, and are meant to ensnare the heedless foot which will trespass on their blackberry preserves. Sometimes their little grindstones are found on the hills, too. Wise men say that they are spindle whorls—but we know nought of such.

If the pixies are not seen, our ghosts, of course, are, else were they no ghosts. It is safe to expect one at any cross-road, and concerning them the visitor may enquire, if he fears them. There are one or two who walk with head under arm, and one, with his head held before him, rides down a hill which it is kinder not to indicate, on a hurdle. Why they are thus mutilated is not known now, but no doubt in the long ago days their originals were so buried hard by in order to prevent the very restlessness which is the trouble now. Elsewhere such burials have been actually found in places so haunted.

Of course some "white witchcraft" still lingers here, and the darker belief in the evil eye and the power of "overlooking" an enemy is firmly rooted. Perhaps we have no lore of this kind which differs from that of other counties, but at least we have a charm against "overlooking," which dates back to the hammer of Thor and the might of iron against spells. It is but needful for the victim to drive a nail firmly into the footprint of that one who is overlooking for ill, thus returning the evil to the sender, and presumably nailing it fast. The words which should be said are forgotten.

The "white witch" will help us to strange cures in many village ailments, and still the spider suffers in uncomfortable ways in the hope of driving out the last

remnants of the ague which was once the scourge of our marshes; and there are trees still bearing very fresh marks of the auger to betoken that they have been made the mausoleum of some shrew-mouse, that the twigs may cure the paralysis of baby or calf which has been attributed to the harmful touch of the little creature.

More—much more— might be written of these subjects, but perhaps enough has been set down to indicate the richness of the old district in lore of its folk. It is not easy to learn, and to the stranger who will laugh at the old beliefs and tales, it is impossible. But to one who can take the tale as it is given, who can answer it with another from his own county, and that in all good faith without undue curiosity, the old traditions will be told, and teller and hearer will be the richer.

Chas. W. Whistler.

Photograph **TRISCOMBE STONE.** ON THE RIDGE OF THE QUANTOCKS *Frith and Co*

A favourite meeting place of the Staghounds. (*See page* 41).

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CHAPTER XII.

STAGHUNTING AND SPORT ON THE QUANTOCKS.

CONTRIBUTED BY PHILIP EVERED.

WITH the steady increase of wild stag hunting in the west of England, the land of Quantock has assumed a new importance as a staghunting territory. The August visitor to Minehead now reckons it an additional advantage that he can, by a judicious use of the West Somerset railway, obtain one or two days a week of staghunting with Mr. Stanley's pack in addition to the four which are provided for him among the wider hills and wilder woods of Exmoor. Nor need he depend upon the train, for it is a pleasant drive to Williton by way of Dunster, Carhampton and Washford, and at the Egremont Arms he will exchange his dog-cart for his hunter, and jog slowly up to the grassy crest of the hills, by way of Stogumber and Thorncombe, or, taking a little longer course, will climb the Quantocks on a somewhat easier gradient by way of Sir Alexander Hood's well known covert of Staple Plain. With two regular hunting days each week on the Quantocks, the fields do not loom so large as they were wont to do in former years, when the Exford pack only occasionally visited the hill; but the bulk of the present field are found to be visitors of the season, from the hostelries and villas of Minehead. From Taunton too, it is an easy matter to train or drive to Crowcombe Heathfield, and from thence a two mile jog brings one to Triscombe Stone, the ancient meeting place for mediæval hunts.

Arrived at the trysting place, one is not far from the kennels of the Quantock pack. Down below amongst the trees lies Keeper's Combe, the nearest of the sylvan

glades to Quantock Lodge, the residence of Mr. E. J. Stanley, M.P. for the Bridgwater division of Somerset. In Keeper's Combe have been built kennels to accommodate a pack of many couples. So near to their happy hunting grounds are both hounds and horses, that the chase of the deer upon the Quantock range is a far less laborious affair than is wild deer hunting in either of the other three divisions of territory over which the long-legged beasts of the chase roam. With no more than two or three miles to kennel, ere the tufters are drawn and the day's work begins, Mr. E. A. V. Stanley has but few of the wearisome journeys which fall to the lot of the other packs. Constant hunting however of the Quantock herd, has naturally enough moved the deer further afield than in former times, and outliers have occasionally to be drawn for at Crowcombe Heathfield and Willett, and with more frequency at Wind Down. Even with two days a week to keep them on the move and teach them more country, the Quantock deer still show a marked disinclination to strike out from the hill, and to stride across the undulating vales which lie all round their home, stretching in a panorama, mile upon mile of tillage and greensward, with coverts of more or less size and depth dotted in all directions. Wire fencing doubtless has much to answer for in restricting the run of the deer, and a happy time may come, when, with a greatly reduced herd, the occasion for much safe-guarding of the crops adjoining the lower edges of the hillside jungles will be no longer necessary as at present. When the Quantock pack was initiated it was feared by many that the stout hill foxes would no longer affect the open heather and warm lying of the sheltered combes, when they found their ears assailed twice a week with the music of hound and horn. These misgivings however have proved to be illfounded, and foxes can be found as readily as before, and are just as well able to lead their pursuers from hill to vale as in the days when the only deer hunting they saw was that of the Devon and Somerset bi-annual visit to the Bagborough Kennels.

With the death of Mrs. Bisset, of Bagborough House, in the spring of 1903, another link has snapped between

the old times and the new. Many of the mementoes of the great regenerator of wild deer hunting have been dis-

Photograph] [*Bert Hole*

A FAMOUS HEAD OF A RED DEER.

Killed on the Quantocks, now in St. Audries' House.

persed, and it may be long ere the baying of the kennelled pack resounds again where for nearly half-a-century

its melody was so familiar. The Quantock staghounds often journey to Slowley by invitation, to hunt the West Country deer, and they find at Slowley and Dunster a country somethat like their own in configuration and in soil, but a good run from Sir Walter Trevelyan's coverts entails a long trot homewards over the Crowcombe Vale, 'ere the kennels in Keeper's Combe are regained. In the fashionable season, too, Mr. Stanley occasionally takes his pack to Exford to try conclusions in the open with the deer of Brendon Common, or of Cloutsham, but here the hunting is very different and indeed more difficult.

Moorcraft takes the place of woodcraft, distances are magnificent, and the deer, adapting themselves to their surroundings, are fleeter and warier, and lighter of head and haunch.

To distant Dartmoor, too, the Quantock pack has been, but there the deer are few and far between, while the coverts are enormous, the rivers are for the most part unfordable, and hunting paths, as required for deer hunting, have yet to be made. In the vales around the Quantock Hills many kind of fences are to be met with, most of them negotiable, but some formidable enough, when the pace at which hounds race upon the scent of a deer is taken into consideration.

In the rich red vale of Bishop's Lydeard and of Willett, the banks are both tall and broad, and every turnip field has a flight or two of hurdles, but the use of iron hurdles does not encourage indiscriminate leaping amongst the sheepfolds. In the direction of Williton and East Quantoxhead there are many little tempting banks, and on the Stringston side of the hill one approaches the excellent going that has gained amongst foxhunters the appellation of 'the Leicestershire of West Somerset.' For from here to Wick Park and away to Cannington there is much country where a good bank jumper can be extended, but should the deer run further afield, beyond Stoke Courcy, a ditch country intervenes before the sea is reached, where none but a bold water jumper can go straight from one grazing marsh to another. The Quantocks are surrounded by handsome mansions nestling against the foothills of the range. At the seaward

Photograph] [*H. Montague Cooper*

THE HOME OF A QUANTOCK STAG HARBOURER, BAGBOROUGH.

end lies St. Audries, the home of the Parliamentary First Whip and M.P. in the Western Division of Somerset, with its Deerpark containing red and fallow deer, and looking down upon the gray and muddy waters of the Severn sea. Further eastward, and nearer still to the sea-front cliffs of blue lias, stands East Quantoxhead Manor house, then comes Alfoxton in its sloping park nestling close against the hills, with Fairfield lying out upon the plain towards the ancient home and stronghold of the de Courcys. A space of something like three miles brings one to Quantock Lodge, which is built of a curious green igneous stone found on the estate.

Barford House, Enmore Castle and the home of the Tyntes at Halswell all lie close together, the last in a deer-park of many acres. Then, in a well-like dip in the heart of the hills, Broomfield Hall lies hidden far from the madding crowd. Monkton and Hestercombe face towards Taunton, while Lydeard House, Watts' House, Combe Florey House, and Sandhill Park, lie all four close together, with Norton Manor on an isolated hill in the vale of Taunton Deane. Cothelestone House lies close against the hill, and so do Bagborough and Tetton, from which is no great ride to Crowcombe Court and Halsway Manor. A little further, towards the Brendon Hill, are Willett House and Hartrow, while Thorncombe and Weacombe are more strictly Quantock mansions. With this goodly list of stately homes the circuit of Quantock is completed, it being probably the best housed range of wild hills in Merry England.

At two points the motorist can approach the Quantocks on suitable roads, one route taking him over the hill-tops from Bridgwater, by way of Enmore and Traveller's Rest, to Cothelstone Park Gate and Bishop's Lydeard; but by the other he must be content to skirt the seaward end of the range from Williton town to Nether Stowey. Here however he obtains a delightful road, full of beautiful scenery, whether he looks toward the heights of Bicknoller Post and Danesborough, with its mantle of oak forest, or away over the Bristol Channel to the distant coast of Wales. None of the other wheel roads

over the hill are practicable, except for horse traffic. To the wandering trout fisher the land of Quantock does not offer much attraction: the streams are small and are all of them closely preserved, and several private ponds have been stocked with rainbow trout, which have proved quite a success, and good weights are the rule rather than the exception. Otter hunting does not flourish in the Quantock region, but the Culmstock Otterhounds occasionally pay successful visits to the local brooks. Badger digging is by no means an extinct sport, and never a winter passes but the account of some successful attack on a badger earth finds its way into the columns of *The West Somerset Free Press*. Game preserving however is carried to a high point on many of the Quantock estates, and the family of *Meles Taxus* is consequently not so numerous as it might be if pheasants were not so favoured. One beautiful feature of the Quantock combes is the grand timber which is here and there to be found, The Scotch firs of St. Audries, the beech of Crowcombe and Cothelstone, and the larch fir of Quantock Lodge are hard to beat in any country, so strong is the good red soil, and so warm is the shelter of the shoulders of the everlasting hills. Black game are less numerous than they were even a quarter of a century since, good heather being only to be found at that end of the hill where foxes are most numerous, and much burning having contributed to the encroachment of gorse. Of all the trophies of sport which Great Britain affords, the heads of Quantock deer must always remain the handsomest and noblest. The warm lying and rich pasturage never fails to produce exceptionally heavy and well spread horns. Some of the Exmoor heads, it is true, approximate closely to those secured between West Quantoxhead and Halswell, but the best of Scotch trophies must always look small and insignificant compared with those grown in this corner of West Somerset.

No reference to Quantock deer hunting would be complete without mention of one of the familiar characters visible at the end of a chase, in the person of Trugg Rich and his exceedingly useful venison cart. Attired in a livery of Lincoln green, with hunting cap complete,

"Trugg" now follows the chase from afar with all his old assiduity, and the last glimpse which the Minehead visitor gets of the deer which has led him over the hills and far away, is to see its carcase being lifted into "Trugg's" vehicle on its way to its final destination. A trot of some four or five miles on the good red roads in the direction of Williton, will then bring our sportsman within hail of the Egremont Arms, where we will leave him after his peregrination of the ancient forest of Quantock.

PHILIP EVERED.

Photograph] [*Bert Hole*

BADGER DIGGING ON THE QUANTOCKS.

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APPENDIX.

I. CYCLING ON THE QUANTOCKS.

LIKE other hilly ranges the heights of the Quantocks are best explored on foot, the innumerable bridle paths being for the most part too steep and rough for a bicycle. An exception may be made of Cocker Combe, which local cyclists ride frequently.

The other roads and lanes in the district afford the most delightful cycling, the bicycle serving, as usual, to save time in getting over long stretches of uninteresting roads that lie between points of interest.

A band of high road completely encircles the hills, and is not more than fifty-five miles altogether, from Taunton to Bridgwater, thence to Williton, and by Crowcombe back to Taunton. I think that on the whole the gradients are better if made from Bridgwater westwards, as after passing Castle of Comfort there is only one ascent. From Williton to Crowcombe the road rises in a steady, easy gradient, after that the drop of nine miles might be "freeled" all the way to Taunton.

Any cyclist who wished to make this excursion in the day, would save time by taking an early train from Taunton to Bridgwater, and reckon to lunch at Kilve. He would have plenty of time to walk up Holford Combe, and see Wordsworth's glen, leaving the bicycle at the Plough Inn, Holford. Williton and Watchet might be cut out of the ride, by taking the turning to Bicknoller at West Quantoxhead, thus making an entire day about the hills.

The roads by Stogursey and Stringston are almost level: Kilton hill is steep, and has a danger board: there is a caution board above Kilve, as the hill winds very much, is narrow, and there is always a chance of its

being blocked by carts at the blind corner near the Hood Arms Hotel.

Buncombe hill from Kingston is the best way of reaching Cothelstone Beacon, the descent from the beacon to the village, as already noted, being very steep indeed. Beyond this it is a very pleasant ride either to Kingston, or Bishop's Lydeard.

The cyclist in the Quantocks will everywhere find cottagers or farmers ready to take care of the bicycle while he visits the locality or rambles among the combes and hills. Of course this entails returning to a fixed spot.

Unquestionably the district is an ideal one for those potterers who have no ambition to make long rides, but rather regard the bicycle as a hobby horse wherewith they may indulge in the easiest fashion any tastes for photography, sketching, or archæology. These riders will find fair roads, and innumerable interests, which will make them readily assert that the most delightful cycling can be enjoyed among the Quantock hills.

II. THE LAKE POETS, AND THE QUANTOCKS.

Somersetshire modestly contented herself with the knowledge that Coleridge and Wordsworth once resided among her hills, without attempting to assert, as well she might, that many of their finest poems were composed under the influences of the gentle West Country rather than the rugged North. The "Lyrical Ballads," by which their names were first brought before the public, were wholly planned and composed in Somersetshire, and published in the autumn of 1798, when both poets were living on the Quantocks.

I have already said that "The Ancient Mariner," undoubtedly Coleridge's finest work, belongs entirely to the Quantock hills, and the following list of his poems and Wordsworth's, specially connected with the locality, may prove interesting to many readers.

In studying the poems, there appear many local touches, apparent to those who know the Quantock hills, though Wordsworth scarcely ever acknowledged his debt to the locality, and the Lake district tries to claim everything he wrote as its own.

For ready reference I give the pages of the popular Chandos edition of the poets.

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"Don'ts" for Picnic Parties.

The Council of the Selborne Society urgently requests visitors to treat the country they are visiting with the reverence due to natural beauty.

DON'T gather such quantities of wild flowers and ferns that before the day is over you are obliged to throw them away on the roadside. By such gathering you injure the flora of the district, and you take away pleasures from many people who like to see flowers and ferns growing in their native haunts.

DON'T disturb the birds in their breeding season.

DON'T litter the places visited with waste papers or torn letters.

DON'T leave empty bottles and other débris of your picnic to vulgarise the spots, the scenery of which you have been enjoying.

For Readers' Notes.

The Editor of the "Homeland Handbooks" would be glad of any notes that would tend to make this Handbook more useful or correct.

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Reviews of Recent Books on British Topography, etc.

The Editor of the Homeland Handbooks will be pleased to receive books for review providing they have British topographical interest.

West Country Ballads & Verses.

By Arthur L. Salmon. Crown 8vo., 2/6, William Blackwood and Son.

Lyrics and Verses.

By Arthur L. Salmon. Crown 8vo., 3.6, William Blackwood and Son.

Mr. Salmon has succeeded in giving voice to the song without words which the fair West Country utters to all that approach her. Very few have known exactly what she says. Kingsley, though he tried to express it, could only confess, "I cannot tell you what you say, red rocks."

But none who know the West will deny that in his Ballads and Verses Mr. Salmon has caught the spirit of the moorland. His poems may be read and re-read with pleasure, for they are the verses of a poet, not merely a rhymester. In his more recent volume, Lyrics and Verses, we learn the secret of his success. Mr. Salmon is a classic scholar, as well as a minstrel of the West. He has met the great Greeks face to face, and learnt to write poetry from the greatest poets on earth.

His "Alkestis" is very beautiful, and there is depth of thought in the "Lament of Achilles," though it is a pity that he has here and there permitted himself to use a hyper-metric line which breaks the smoothness of the verses.

Doubtless his dialect ballads will be regarded as his most effective work. He handles the tongue of Devon with immense skill, and bids it speak with pathos as well as laughter. "A Father of Twins" is capital, but we feel genuine sympathy with the "Parish Clerk," and most of us have met that "District Visitor." These volumes should be in the library of every lover of the West Country.

Sussex.

By F. G. Brabant, M.A. Illustrated by E. H. New, with Sketch Maps and Plans by B. C. B. Post 8vo., cloth, 3.-, one of "The Little Guides." London: Methuen and Co., 36, Essex Street, Strand, W.C.

This charming little book contains matter of the greatest interest for the wanderer in Sussex, afoot or awheel: it is beautifully printed and bound, and contains thirteen charming drawings by Mr. New, and some delightful maps and plans drawn in the seventeenth century style by B. C. B.

The book commences with a survey of the physical features, the fauna and flora, and the antiquities of the county. The body of the book is really a County gazetteer, with every place of interest mentioned in its alphabetical order; an Appendix deals with the brasses and old stained glass in Sussex Churches, and an interesting reference to the several claims of the five churches in England each of which claims to be the smallest.

We note, however, that the light railway connecting Robertsbridge with Tenterden in Kent, and opening up Bodiam and the interesting villages in the Rother Valley, is not referred to at all. We also miss a reference to the Bull Ring, one of the few remaining in England, that still exists *in situ*, before the gateway of Battle Abbey.

Norfolk.

By William A. Dutt. J. M. Dent & Co., 29 and 30, Bedford Street, Covent Garden, W.C. 4/6 net.

This is one of Messrs. Dent & Co.'s excellent county guides. It is neatly bound, extremely well printed, ably written and edited, and has an excellent Gazetteer and Index.

There is a pocket at the back containing a map of the county by Bartholomew, and distributed among the letterpress are seven sectional maps devoted to small districts. Mr. Symington's wash drawing of Norwich Cathedral is an illustration really worthy of a place, but to our mind most of the drawings are too small and colourless to enhance the value of the book.

Mr. Dutt commences the itinerary with the county town—"The City of Churches." "Every one entering Norwich," he says, "is at once impressed by the sight of its two chief buildings, the Cathedral and Castle. The former, a splendid example of the Anglo-Norman style of architecture, occupies a position which does not do it justice. It stands upon low ground, and the best views of it are obtained from the surrounding hills. It is difficult to realize, unless you stand immediately beside it, that its spire is, with the exception of that of Salisbury, the highest in the kingdom, being 315 feet in height."

A Book of Exmoor.

Crown 8vo., 339 pp., 6/-, Methuen & Co.

Mr. F. J. Snell has written one of the most interesting and valuable volumes dealing with Exmoor that we have yet seen.

Mr. Snell has lived all his life upon the verge of the Moor, and his pleasure and hobby has been to wander amid the folds of the hills chatting with the villagers, shepherds, and sportsmen.

The book is in no sense intended to be a guide to Exmoor, but chats most pleasantly on such interesting subjects as the Story of the Forest, Exmoor Deer, Sheep and Ponies, Dialect and Place Names. A most interesting section deals with the folk-lore. The book also contains chapters on the Worthies of Exmoor, with good stories of the hunting parsons, John Froude and Jack Russell; in fact, the volume is full of that intimate knowledge that only a life-long residence in such a spot can give.

There are no fewer than 65 illustrations. A view of the old Quay at Minehead, with, as a background, the heathery North Hill, on page 352, being particularly charming and unhackneyed.

Mr. Snell has drawn largely from the knowledge of such students of the neighbourhood as Rev. Prebendary Hancock and Rev. W. H. P. Greswell, and we are pleased to see that the Homeland Handbooks are referred to in a friendly spirit.

NOTES ON LOCAL INDUSTRIES.

Sussex Art Ware.

By Frederick Mitchell, Belle Vue Pottery, Rye.

A very pretty art pottery is made at Rye, in a fine old house approached by an unusual avenue of trained pear trees. A great deal of art pottery is made in different localities, notably the Farnham Green Ware, referred to in the Farnham Handbook; the Royal Barum Ware, made at Barnstaple, and the Aller Vale Pottery, near Torquay.

The ware in question is entirely a Sussex production, and is only sold by agents in Sussex towns; it can be obtained at St. Leonards and also at Winchelsea. The old Sussex pig is perhaps the best known design in this ware. It is a quaint little porker, with a detachable head and a very flat snout forming a base for standing upon when removed. Upon the body is carved the motto, "Wun't be Druv." The pig was originally used at weddings in the county to serve for the fulfilment of a piece of Sussex Wit—the bride, bridegroom, and guests can, without overmuch indulgence, drink "a hogshead of beer."

A well-designed green bottle—a copy of the old pilgrim bottle, with a place for the leather strap below the handle—is also one of the specialities of the Sussex pottery, and there are some beautiful designs in vases ornamented by the trailing hop vine. All the articles are entirely hand-made, being spun on the old-fashioned potter's wheel and moulded by hand. The ware was invented by the uncle of the present owner, about fifty years ago.

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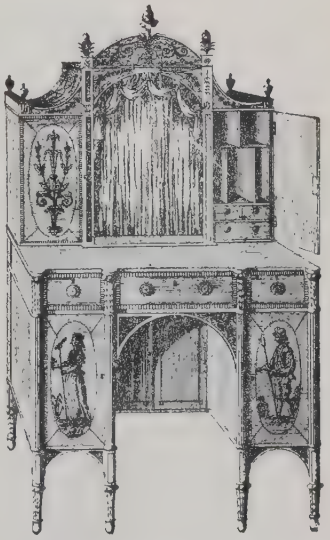

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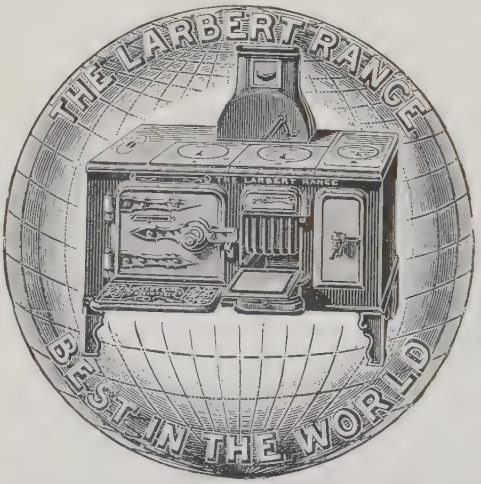

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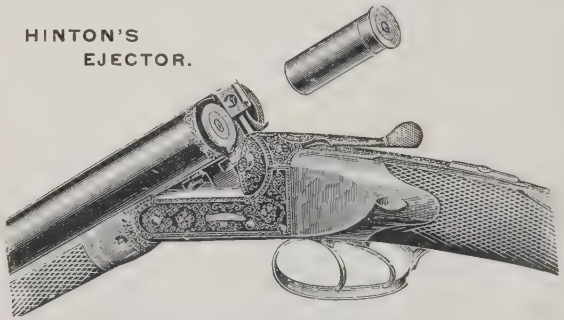

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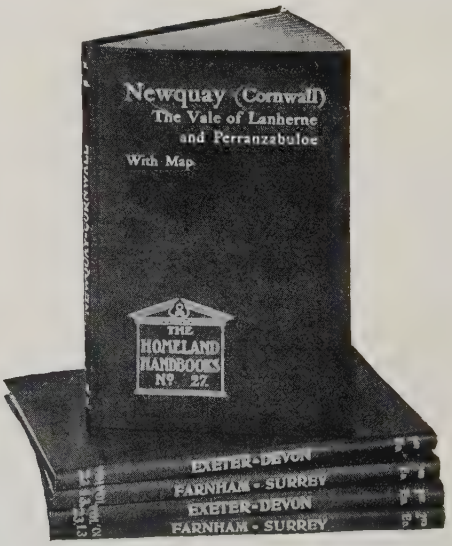

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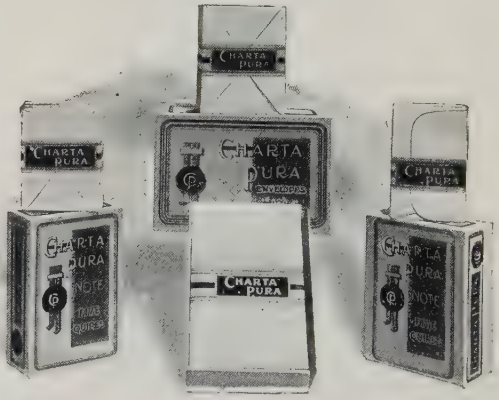

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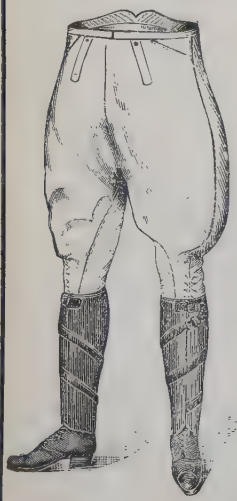

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